

Rowan University

Rowan Digital Works

Theses and Dissertations

2-17-2021

Reimagining MOVE: Revolutionary Black humanism and the 1985 bombing

Joseph E. Cranston
Rowan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cranston, Joseph E., "Reimagining MOVE: Revolutionary Black humanism and the 1985 bombing" (2021).
Theses and Dissertations. 2873.
<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/2873>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact graduateresearch@rowan.edu.

**REIMAGINING MOVE: REVOLUTIONARY BLACK HUMANISM AND THE
1985 BOMBING**

by

Joseph E. Cranston

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of History
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Arts in History
at
Rowan University
January 5, 2021

Thesis Advisor: Chanelle Rose Ph.D.

Committee Members:
Emily Blank, Ph.D.
Sandra Joy, Ph.D.

© 2020 Joseph E. Cranston

Dedication

To the unwilling and innocent: Tomaso, Katricia “Tree” Dotson, Zenetta Dotson,
Delicia Phillips, Phil Phillips, and Michael Moses Ward “Birdie”

Acknowledgements

Much gratitude to Dr. Chanelle Nyree Rose who has overseen this project since its inception. Thank you, Doc for your thoroughgoing critique and vigorous support! Additionally, many thanks to Dr. Emily Blank and Professor Sandra Joy for their enthusiasm and willingness to be a part of my committee. Last, but not least, all the best to the fantastic professors at Rowan University who have fostered my lifelong passion for history

Abstract

Joseph E. Cranston
REIMAGINING MOVE: REVOLUTIONARY HUMANISM AND THE 1985
BOMBING
2019-2020
Chanelle Nyree Rose, Ph.D.
Master of Arts in History

This thesis examines the extremist group, MOVE and its founder Vincent Leaphart (a.k.a John Africa) in the context of Revolutionary Black Humanism, rather than simply a footnote to the tragic events of May 13, 1985. It explores MOVE's predecessors in the Black Power movement including The Black Panther Party and how these organizations and individuals might have influenced MOVE and their aims. In addition, ample examination is given to the role that systemic police brutality and racism, specifically within the Philadelphia Police Department and city government played in the decisions that MOVE made as they attempted to create a community in the ultimately unwelcoming urban settings of two Philadelphia neighborhoods; but also in the methods employed by police and city officials as they effected the removal and attempted extermination of the group.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Abstract | v |
| Chapter 1: Introduction | 1 |
| Scholarly Review/Historiography | 5 |
| Methodology and Scope | 11 |
| Chapter 2: John Africa and the Powelton Village Community Action Movement (aka MOVE) | 12 |
| Chapter 3: The Decline of the Local Black Panther Party and the Advent of MOVE | 29 |
| COINTELPRO and the Philadelphia BPP | 30 |
| Rejection of Modern Technology and Lifestyle | 46 |
| MOVE Counters Rizzo's Treachery and Policing in Philadelphia | 54 |
| Chapter 4: MOVE 9 On Trial | 68 |
| Neighborhood Advocates | 75 |
| The Trial | 93 |
| Chapter 5: Revolution is Forever, 6221 Osage Avenue | 101 |
| Ramona Africa | 105 |
| Conclusion | 124 |
| References | 127 |

Chapter 1

Introduction

For many Philadelphians of a particular generation, the event that transpired on May 13, 1985 was equivocal to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and most certainly represents yet another “day that will live in infamy.” On this particular date, the treacherous actions of the Philadelphia police force in concert with the inept and ineffectual in- action by the city government metastasized into a decision to drop a military grade incendiary device onto an occupied row-home in Philadelphia’s west end. A decision, that resulted in the deaths of eleven persons, five of whom were children.¹ Before the bomb was dropped, a full frontal assault commenced with a barrage of almost ten-thousand rounds of ammunition directly fired at the residence that served as headquarters for the radical group that collectively called itself MOVE. For over a decade, MOVE remained figuratively as well as literally in the cross hairs of the Philadelphia police forces’ gun sights. Complaints of MOVE’S ill-kept property and loud-speaker aided verbal harangues aimed toward the denizens of this West Philly district went largely ignored until the members of this revolutionary collective erected a make-shift bunker on the roof of their row-home and purportedly brandished firearms in plain view. The laundry list of conflicts between MOVE and the police was lengthy indeed, and this latest engagement at 6221 Osage Avenue seemed like the final showdown. The explosion resulted in the MOVE residence being set ablaze. A crude and cruel decision to let the fire burn was decided upon. The rationale behind this decision to dislodge

¹ Philadelphia Special Investigation Commission, “The Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations of the Philadelphia Special Investigation Commission, March 6, 1986.” Temple University Urban Archives, Philadelphia, Pa., Box 989, Folder 1883.

MOVE or effectively destroy them still remains controversial. Nevertheless, the resulting conflagration inevitably swept through the periphery and decimated sixty-one homes. Miraculously, two persons narrowly escaped the flash point at 6221 Osage, an adult woman and an adolescent boy.²

After the embers cooled and the city officials combed the rubble of the MOVE house for human remains, the residents of this predominately black neighborhood, many of whom had originally filed formal complaints against MOVE, wondered aloud if such a slovenly and ill-conceived police action could transpire in an all-white community. Many activists such as Alice Walker and the esteemed Cornell West argue stridently that such an action could only happen in a black locality.³ According to the still incarcerated activist, Mumia Abu-Jamal, the MOVE fire was no accident. Abu-Jamal insists, “May 13, 1985, was the most premeditated police raid and destroy mission in U.S. history, and was an un-holy aim to destroy the MOVE organization.”⁴

In May of 2015, *National Public Radio* published a news feature by journalist and Philadelphia native, Gene Demby. Demby’s article, entitled “I’m From Philly. 30 years Later, I’m Still Trying To Make Sense Of The MOVE Bombing,” serves as a summation of the unceasing confusion about what MOVE actually was about and how their altercation with city government accelerated toward ruination.⁵ The MOVE fire forever stands as a part of my own historical memory and ironically, the anniversary of the

² Ibid.

³ Dr. Cornel West remembers MOVE, May 2015 hate5six.com (accessed May 24, 2016)

⁴ Quoted in J.M. Floyd-Thomas, The Burning of Rebellious Thoughts: MOVE as Revolutionary Black Humanism, *The Black Scholar* Vol. 32, No. 1 (Spring 2002) 11.

⁵ Gene Demby, “I’m From Philly. 30 years Later, I’m Still Trying To Make Sense Of The MOVE Bombing,” *NPR Morning Edition*, May 15, 2015, <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/05/13> (accessed May 25, 2016)

MOVE tragedy comes at a time when violence continues to rage against black America, most prominently witnessed in the Ferguson and Baltimore travesties. In this racially hostile climate, I felt compelled to dissect the origin of this tribulation as well as the counterculture organization known as MOVE. The story of MOVE is largely delinquent of examination within a historical context and does not fit neatly inside the bounds of the traditional narrative of the Black Power or Counterculture movements. In order to generate a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the organization, I began by asking several key questions. Was MOVE a legitimate part of the black freedom struggle? What are the origins and founding principles of MOVE? How was this collective similar and/or different from other counter culture groups? To answer these questions, this study examines the origins, developments, practices and protest strategies of MOVE, culminating with the historic bombing in 1985. This work argues that MOVE was indeed an integral part of the Black Freedom Struggle since their militancy and vehemence mirrored the tactics of other Black Power organizations that aimed to challenge the disproportionate incarceration of black persons; they fought against racial segregation, and the economic discrimination that was predominate in U.S. especially Philadelphia, which represented one of the most in-hospitable climates for a large segment of black America. Specifically, MOVE shared similarities with the BPP's call for the release of black prisoners, end to police brutality, the murder of black people, autonomy for children and youth, radical restructuring of the educational system and the end of the capitalist system. Moreover, MOVE displayed a penchant for guerilla tactics and promoted an ultra-radicalized ideology that was vilified by the directorate in the city of Philadelphia, which associated them with other "revolutionary" groups like the Black

Liberation Army and the Weather Underground who also railed against the U.S. government during their time. However, this comparison is not entirely accurate because the preservation of human life became the main organizing principle MOVE ideology, and the group ultimately adopted a more militant posture in response to police aggression. I contend that MOVE's advocacy for total human equality, communion with nature, attention to animal welfare and call for the end of the capitalist system situates this organization firmly within the broader New Left counterculture movements of the 1960s and early 1970s.

Even though MOVE's willingness to resort to direct confrontation and even violence to protect the rights of animals is firmly within the tradition of radical rights activists, the organization ultimately adopted a more militant posture in response to police aggression alongside increasing opposition from local residents who opposed their alternative lifestyle. To be sure, MOVE's revolutionary humanism set it apart from many of its contemporaries because it encompassed a very broad spectrum of rights. As an early affiliate, Donald Glassey observed, "Unlike MOVE, most of the organizations that had participated in the civil-rights and anti-war movements and their progeny, had espoused but one or two goals. MOVE juxtaposed so many goals that the resulting mixture became unstable and essentially contradictory. Its adherence to self-defense, for example conflicted with its admonition to preserve all living things."⁶

⁶ Kathleen Neal Cleaver, "Philadelphia Fire" *Transition* No. 51 (May, 1991): 151.

Scholarly Review/Historiography

This study of MOVE and the 1985 bombing both draws on and diverges from an existing body of scholarship. Analysis of the MOVE conflict began to surface almost upon the conclusion of the Philadelphia Special Investigation Hearings in 1987. The first and arguably the most famous publication was penned by two journalists who attended the Special Investigation Hearings and bore witness to the proceedings. Although very detailed, the appropriately titled, *Burning Down The House* by Hillary Hervenor and John Anderson fails to give a less than biased position against the MOVE organization as it almost completely vindicates police and city government from recrimination and contains only a sparse evaluation of the tragedy and its aftermath.⁷

In a similar fashion, Randi and Michael Boyette offer a narrative account of the tragedy in their 1989 title *Let IT Burn*. The authors resided in Philadelphia during the 1978 confrontation as well as during the 1985 fire for which Michael Boyette served on the grand jury investigation. Although Boyette gained a first-hand account of the actions of leading players and witnesses, he and his wife and co-author continued to research the beginnings and motives of MOVE and their ultimate collision with the city government. The end of the Boyettes' extensive research resulted in a comprehensive treatise that serves as a springboard for comprehending the basic back story of MOVE. Even though both authors contend that police and certain city officials were grossly incompetent on that fateful day in 1985, they avoid assigning accountability to any party in particular and

⁷ John Anderson and Hillary Hervenor, *Burning Down The House* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987) 9.

largely avoid any discussion of the well-documented racist thread that was woven into Philadelphia police rank and file.⁸

This study employs the idea of revolutionary black humanism to affirm MOVE's legacy within the black liberation struggle and situates its unorthodox practices within the context of the counterculture movement of the 1960s and 1970s. In the publication of 2002 essay entitled "The Burning Of Rebellious Thoughts: MOVE as Revolutionary Black Humanism," historian, J.M. Floyd Thomas argues, "Since MOVE illustrated the confluence of black religiosity, political insurgency, and cultural agency their experiences in post-WWII Philadelphia are squarely linked to the legacies of Black Power radicalism."⁹ Floyd Thomas couches MOVE among the descendants of Black Power style politics and the larger historic tradition of African American religiosity which served as the "engine" for revolutionary amongst enslaved Africans.¹⁰ According to Floyd Thomas, this combination of traditions, or "Revolutionary Humanism" was rigorously employed by MOVE as a means of resistance to dominate American

⁸ Michael and Randi Boyette, *Let It Burn* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1989)

*During the 1990s MOVE received more serious scholarly attention from various writers, especially sociologists. In 1990 Hizkias Assefra and Paul Wahrhaftig examined MOVE's use of "rational irrationality" while unpacking the radical group's unique world view in *The MOVE Crisis in Philadelphia: Extremist Groups and Conflict Resolution*. Assefra and Wahrhaftig use the MOVE tragedy as a model for conflict resolution in both domestic and international venues. The authors both concur that negotiation and mediation as well as a clear comprehension of the subjective frame of reference that all parties in a conflict retain. Adding to the surge of scholarship, Robin Wagner-Pacifici's 1994 work, *Discourse and Destruction: The City of Philadelphia Vs. MOVE* explicates the use of discourse analysis. Pacifici argues, "Competing narratives are produced and contested within a formal investigation and how competing opinions of the MOVE organization led to the discourse of war, violence and destruction. Academic works such as these certainly prove useful when grappling with the subjective framework of two competing parties and the aims of conflict resolution."

⁹ J.M. Floyd Thomas, "The Burning of Rebellious Thoughts: MOVE as Revolutionary Black Humanism," *The Black Scholar* No. 32 (Spring 2002): 12.

¹⁰ Ibid.

hegemony and by advocating the “liberation of all people through cultural agency and racial consciousness.”¹¹

At the same time, since the members of the MOVE organization shared a penchant for living and working as a collective, they shared a striking similarity with the various new age communes that flourished in rural areas throughout the U.S during the late 1960s. A reading of Roberta Price’s *Huerfano: A Memoir of Life in the Counterculture* was useful in helping to draw comparisons between MOVE and their contemporary counterparts. While MOVE maintained their position in the urban arena of Philadelphia, Price and a group of companions uprooted themselves, embraced a life of voluntary poverty and founded an alternative community in the mountains of Colorado where they farmed the land, built their own homes and bore children. Similarly, Scott Macfarlane’s *The Hippie Narrative: A Literary Perspective on the Counterculture*, sheds light on MOVE’s similarities with other counterculture and antiestablishment movements during this period. Macfarlane underscores how the broader counterculture movement of the late 1960s and early 70s, which MOVE was a part of, fostered “A period of questioning and challenging rules and norms and of embracing spiritual and artistic modes from other cultures that had been previously been ignored.”¹² In sum, MOVE leader John Africa and the disciples of MOVE may not fit neatly into the oft romanticized counterculture mold, however, as previously stated, MOVE’s call for the end of capitalism, advocacy for

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Catez Stevens, “Post-Modernism and the Jim Jones Potential,” <http://allthings2all.blogspot.com/2004/11postmodernism-and-jim-jones-potential.html>. Quoted in Scott MacFarlane, *The Hippie Narrative: A Literary Perspective On The Counterculture* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: MacFarlane and Company Inc. Publishers, 2007) 4.

animal welfare and avowal for nature based living were archetypal expressions of their generation.

I argue that racist motives ultimately led to the bombing of MOVE in 1985, echoing the scholarship on the long history of institutional racism within Philadelphia's police department. In contrast to the publication offered by Michael and Randi Boyette, Harry's *Attention MOVE! This is America*, underscores Philadelphia's history of police brutality, particularly under the aegis of the infamous police commissioner and eventual mayor, Frank Rizzo. Harry asserts that the tactics used against MOVE in 1985 during the tenure of Mayor Wilson Goode were established long before by Rizzo.¹³ Harry contends that the MOVE fire was nothing more than an execution of the radical group.

Likewise, in her dissertation, "A Case study of Philadelphia/MOVE," Suzanne Ife Williams demonstrates how the "City of Brotherly Love" owns a storied past history of violence toward blacks while the neglect and unclear guidelines of the police action that drove MOVE members from their homes in 1978 and 1985 was an extension of the long standing practice toward Philadelphia's black inhabitants and a representation of the greater policy of lawful repression that overrides human justice.

Kimberly Saunders and Judson Jefferies entitled, "Framing MOVE: The Press Complicity in the Murder of Women and Children in the City of (Un) Brotherly Love." endeavors to determine if a fabled city newspaper was responsible for framing the MOVE organization members in such an unfavorable light that a public sense of indifference was cultivated toward the inane police action that killed eleven people and

¹³ Margot Harry, *Attention Move! This is America* (New York: Banner press LLC., 1987)

destroyed two whole city blocks. Saunders and Jefferies concluded that since a large cross-section of Philadelphians (many of whom were black) displayed such little empathy toward MOVE, the imperative to hold the mayor, police and other city officials accountable was virtually non-existent. Even though their article underscores the media's role in shaping public opinion, it also sheds light on MOVE's clash with Philadelphia city government and the nefarious actions of the police department.

Building upon the work of Saunders and Jefferies, Ekeogu Joi Onyekada's Ph.D dissertation entitled *Move People Are Used To This: The MOVE organization, Media Representation and Resistance During pre- MOVE Philadelphia Conflict Years*, expands on the concept of press complicity relating to the MOVE confrontation. Onyekada contends that the journalistic portrayal of MOVE, beginning with the 1978 standoff that inevitably lead to the fire of 1985, was overwhelmingly negative. Onyekada also argues that prior to the two egregious clashes, MOVE was considered an effective force against the racist ethos that dominated Philadelphia policy making.¹⁴

Finally, Scott Ellsworth's account of Tulsa authorities utilizing military airplanes to fire incendiary devices and munitions upon a black civilian neighborhood offers some insight into the MOVE bombing, despite the clear differences between both events. In *Death in a Promised Land*, Ellsworth chronicles the wholesale burning and looting of black Tulsa, a city's vigilante tradition, and a mode of white aggression that had long been a part of the local custom.¹⁵ Ellsworth initially posits that, "Typically, there are two

¹⁴ Ekeogu Joi Onyekada, "Move People Are Used To This: The MOVE Organization, Media Representation and Resistance During pre-MOVE Philadelphia Conflict Years" PhD dissertation, Arizona State University, 2014 www.proquest.com

¹⁵ Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (Baton Rouge: The University of Louisiana press, 1982) 57.

ways which whites destroy a black community. One is by building a freeway through it, the other is by changing the zoning laws.”¹⁶ However *Death in a Promised Land* expounds another cataclysm that is strikingly consistent with the MOVE standoff in Philadelphia over 60 years later. Ellsworth’s account of Tulsa authorities utilizing military airplanes to fire incendiary devices and munitions upon a black civilian neighborhood is indeed spine-chilling. Moreover, the author argues resolutely how the “extremely selective nature of Tulsa Oklahoma’s law enforcement helped to create a situation where the role of the police in the actual policing of the city was ill-defined.”¹⁷ Comparably, “selective” methods of maintaining law and order played a monumental role in the emergence of MOVE and other Black Power radicalism in Philadelphia during the 1960s and 70s. However, Ellsworth’s 1921 narrative which culminates with the discharge of explosives onto Tulsa’s black populace via bi-planes was on the whole, a spontaneous happening. As subsequent decades unfolded, the commingling of local police agencies and the U.S. military became routine. After observing the U.S. government response to the actions of organized crime syndicates and civil unrest during the 1930s, the esteemed historian, Charles A. Beard declared that, “The United States was becoming significantly more militarized in government, society, and culture.”¹⁸ Beginning in 1956, the Federal Bureau of Investigation at the behest of the infamous director, J Edgar Hoover unfurled COINTELPRO. (Counter Intelligence Program) Apart from its varied resources for discrediting and dismantling individuals and groups the FBI deemed to be subversive, COINTELPRO financed and furnished police departments throughout the U.S. with

¹⁶ Ibid, 108.

¹⁷ Ibid, 101.

¹⁸ Charles A. Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1948) 578.

military grade weaponry.¹⁹ Moreover, just a few years before the MOVE conflagration unfolded in Philadelphia, *The Military Cooperation with Civilian Law Enforcement Agencies Act of 1981* was authored as a component of the so called “War on Drugs.” This piece of legislation undoubtedly hastened the trend toward the militarization of police.²⁰

Methodology and Scope

Various primary sources serve as the bedrock of this narrative, which include first-hand written accounts, film, recorded interviews, documents, and memoirs. These types of sources as well as main stream news accounts and testimonials found in African-American publications are abundantly available throughout the Philadelphia region.²¹ At the time of this writing, efforts to contact living MOVE members through their official web site onamove.com have been met with enthusiasm. Conversely, attempts to contact former members of Philadelphia city government has proven to be a challenge since many are deceased. Nevertheless, the recorded interviews and autobiographical works provide personal accounts of MOVE members.

¹⁹ See Charles J. Dunlap Jr., “The Origins of the American Military Coup,” *Parameters* (Winter 1992-93) 2-20

²⁰ See Richard H. Kohn, “The Danger of Militarization in an Endless War on Terrorism,” *The Journal of Military History* 73 (2008) 177-208.

²¹ The majority of sources are housed in locations such as Temple University Urban Archives, The Blockley Collection and Van Pelt Library, (which are both located on the University of Pennsylvania campus) and the excellent Peace Collection at Swathmore College.

Chapter 2

John Africa and the Powelton Village Community Action Movement (aka MOVE)

When coming to grips with the origins and emergence of John Africa's MOVE, one must consider the cultural and social milieu which surrounded him and his coterie of disciples, as well as their justification for employing extremely unorthodox practices. The beginnings of John Africa, who was once known as Vincent Leaphart, was pronounced by a personal evolution which dovetailed with the increasing radicalized atmosphere of the time period colloquially known as the "Sixties." As growing opposition to the Vietnam War and the expeditious growth of Black power politics served to unite America's New Left, cities the likes of San Francisco and New York served as models for the Countercultures' full flare up across the nation. Philadelphia, where Leaphart had been born and raised, followed suit by transitioning into a seedbed for activism and civil strife. Within this radical climate, Leaphart developed a revolutionary black humanism that embraced elements of Black Power politics and the counterculture movement while deviating from both in distinct ways that placed supreme emphasis on all living creatures. It was not clear to his family and others who knew him well, what exactly caused Leaphart's abrupt philosophical shift while in his late thirties. This chapter examines the combination of his portentous childhood, stint in the military and botched marriage that served as the catalyst for the maturation of Leaphart's unique world view. These are important points to consider, since for many, the man who became known as John Africa, still remains an enigma.

Leaphart's formative years shaped his arresting world view and gravitation toward humanism. The son of two southern migrants Fredrick and Lennie Mae Leaphart, Vincent was in many ways typical of most children who grew up within a predominately black neighborhood in West Philadelphia. The Leapharts struggled to raise Vincent and his nine siblings in the hard-scrabble depression era neighborhood situated just behind the Philadelphia Zoo. However, Fredrick's steady employment as a handyman and the couple's commitment to their Christian faith apparently kept the family buoyant.²² Vincent's eldest sister Louise James remembers fondly, "Our parents taught us by example and although at times we were money poor, our parents also taught us what money can't buy."²³ Unfortunately, the bustling yet seemingly happy Leaphart clan was beset with tragedy when the eldest son Fredrick Jr. was shot and killed in a case of mistaken identity, and their matriarch Lennie Mae died in her early 40s.²⁴ The widowed Fredrick overwhelmed with grief and the responsibility of carrying on as a single parent, fell into a deep depression. Louise James recalls, "He got through the days in a listless kind of way. The older children in the family understood what he was going through and just tried to be there for him."²⁵ Soon after, the Leapharts began to splinter.²⁶

Vincent Leaphart's unpromising childhood circumstances were further complicated by an undefined learning disability that truncated his education at about a third grade level, resulting in a life long struggle to improve his ability to read and write. According to

²² Interview with a family friend in Craig Mcray, "Who was John Africa?" *Philadelphia Inquirer Sunday Magazine*, January 12, 1986 p. 18.

²³ Testimony of John Africa's eldest sister Louise Leaphart James in Louise James, *John Africa... A Childhood Untold Until Today* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris LLC, 2013) vii.

²⁴ Ibid 24.

²⁵ Ibid 29.

²⁶ Mcray, "Who was John Africa?" 19.

another sibling, Lavern Sims, “All the Leaphart children went to McMichael School in Philadelphia which went from Kindergarten to Eight Grade. But since Vinnie was considered ‘slow’ and ‘backward,’ he was transferred to E. Spencer Miller, and put in what was called ‘OB’ or ‘Odd ball’ as the kids called it.”²⁷ Tellingly, however, the young Leaphart performed well in his Civics class!²⁸

In spite of his scholastic deficiencies, Vincent Leaphart evidently managed to land on his feet upon entering adulthood. A year of active duty in the Army during the Korean War, apparently made a lasting impression on the young man from West Philadelphia as Leaphart often spoke of the juxtaposition between Korea’s beautiful landscape and the brutality of the conflict itself.²⁹

After completing his tour of duty in Korea, Vincent returned stateside, followed the example of his father, and became an in-demand handyman who worked consistently throughout his neighborhood. Many persons in his local described him as “very level-headed and dependable.”³⁰ Louise James gave witness to Vincent’s skills, “Though he had no training in carpentry, Vinnie was really good at it. He took up an entire living room floor and laid it straight. On another occasion he tore out our neighbor’s old kitchen cabinets and replaced them with sturdy new ones. He also made her this real heavy, desk with a cabinet that stood as high as a breakfront. Really beautiful!”³¹ Moreover, he also gained a reputation for his love of animals and augmented his income

²⁷ As told by Lavern Simms in *John Africa... Childhood Untold until Today* 18.

²⁸ McCray, “Who was John Africa?” 19.

²⁹ Interview with Leaphart’s first wife, Dorothy Clark January 2010 in *Ibid* 20.

³⁰ *Ibid*.

³¹ Leaphart-James, *John Africa* 42.

by offering pet care services.³² According to Sharon Sims Cox, “People called him the Dog Man. Everywhere he went he had a trail of dogs behind him. He took care of pets for rich people and used the money to feed the animals fresh meat. He didn’t believe in feeding dogs out of a can. He was bent on protecting all life. If he saw a fly struggling in a puddle of water, he’d take the time to get it out so it wouldn’t drown... He stayed in the house with candles, because he knew the danger of electricity. He never had any need for technology. He didn’t care about cloths or cars or money in his pocket. Any money he got he gave away.”³³ Those who knew Leaphart as a youth could attest with certainty that “He liked dogs and all animals.”³⁴ Louise James- Leaphart remembered that “Vincent always had dogs following him home. They instinctively knew of his love for them, and they responded in kind.”³⁵ Eventually, his love for dogs and animals would become an integral part of MOVE’s humanistic philosophy.

In time, the young man developed a romantic interest in a neighbor named Dorothy Clark. A short courtship resulted in the couple marrying in 1961.³⁶ It was also during this time, that Leaphart’s new wife, Clark, developed an attraction to a Christian church known as the Kingdom of Yahweh, that seemingly had an impact on his burgeoning beliefs. Their marriage was not without challenges as Vincent was often away on extended stays in New York City studying and practicing interior decorating. It was during these periods of separation that Clark felt compelled to exert her independence

³² Sharon Sims Cox, as told to Carol Saline, “My life in MOVE,” *Philadelphia Magazine*, September 1985, p. 169.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Craig R. McCoy “Who was John Africa?” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 8, 2010, pg. 19

³⁵ Leaphart- James, *John Africa* 21.

³⁶ Testimony of Dorothy Clark in “Who was John Africa?” 19.

and join the religious organization.³⁷ Disciples of the Kingdom of Yahweh extolled the virtues of natural living, vegetarianism, and communion with nature. “Other churches weren’t giving it to me.” claimed Clark, “I was out for the truth.”³⁸ In the beginning, Vincent was circumspect of Dorothy’s new faith but gradually warmed to it.³⁹ Subconsciously, his exposure to his young wife’s religious affiliation served to facilitate his own world view in subsequent years.

Vincent Leaphart’s frequent excursions to New York and the couple’s inability to conceive children eventually took its toll on the marriage. An incident of domestic violence occurred when Vincent struck Dorothy “with his hand twice across my face.”⁴⁰ The incident was serious enough for Dorothy to press charges against Vincent in early 1966. This eruption set divorce proceedings in motion and the couple parted ways within a year.⁴¹ Dorothy Clark contended, “When we separated it was not on a hostile level, I had made up my mind that I had to make a new life for myself and I gave him the same freedom.”⁴²

Soon after the dissolution of his marriage, Leaphart, now in his mid-thirties, felt compelled to change his environs and undertook a lateral migration from his place of origin, the Mantua neighborhood of West Philadelphia to Powelton Village located on the cusp of the University of Pennsylvania campus. Geographically speaking, the sojourn was no great stretch, However, Leaphart’s decision to take up residence in an integrated

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

community consisting of New Left radicals, free thinkers and academics was unquestionably a giant stride. Once he took up residence, the outspoken and eccentric Leaphart reignited his vocation as the neighborhood handyman and carpenter and of course dog walker.

The Powelton Village clique that he soon curried favor with often consorted under the sway of libertarian socialist thinkers the likes of Herbert Marcuse and Philadelphia's own Noam Chomsky.⁴³ Others lauded Marxist icons of the era the likes of Jean-Paul Sartre and Ernesto "Che" Guevara.⁴⁴ The thick ideological vibe that encapsulated Powelton Village was much like other counterculture communities that thrived at this time and would have a profound impact on Leaphart's revolutionary black humanism, which vehemently rejected materialism, eschewed politics and valorized man's harmony with nature. Sociologist, Elijah Anderson asserted, "Among the youthful counterculture, there was a missionary zeal to create a 'humane life-style' in contrast to the more conventional society. The idea was to be free of racism, materialism. And 'mindless conventionality.'"⁴⁵

At any given moment that the out-spoken and head-strong Leaphart wasn't fulfilling his duties as neighborhood handyman and animal wrangler, he committed himself to his own new found faith and sermonized anyone who took the time to listen. As an early MOVE disciple, Sharon Sims Cox witnessed Leaphart's evolution, "He talked to people who were reading all kinds of books, people who had Ph.D.'s and radical ideas. He

⁴³ See Noam Chomsky, *At War With Asia* (Edinburgh and Oakland: AK Press, 2004)

⁴⁴ Paul Lyons, *The People of This Generation: The Rise and Fall of the New Left in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2003, 152.

⁴⁵ Elijah Anderson, *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community* (Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 1990), 16.

picked their brains. That's how he formulated his own ideas since he could barely read and write. When he put his ideas into his own language, it was very poetic. That was what attracted a lot of people. He sounded so good."⁴⁶ Leaphart's congenial demeanor and attention grabbing speaking style drew only curiosity seekers at first, but before long the self-stylized prophet with the trail of dogs in tow garnished a small group of followers that became colloquially known as "Vinnie's Gang" around Powelton Village.⁴⁷ Leaphart's postulations spanned the entire gamut of societal concerns. Corruption in politics, physical and mental health, man's place in nature, and the importance of family were all talking points. One early follower maintained that Leaphart spoke "the absolute truth."⁴⁸ "He (Leaphart) was always very consistent in the things that he said and did his diet, His strategies, his exercise, his love. He was always very strong and always did physical work. His voice was so deep and powerful, like a roar of thunder, yet people never felt intimidated around him. He was very understanding. He made bad seem good. Everybody was naturally drawn to his goodness. You would be mesmerized by him."⁴⁹

Leaphart's ideological views solidified into a more coherent set of beliefs after he met a young suburban white man named Donald Glassey, who had finished a Master's degree in Social Work at the University of Pennsylvania, "felt strongly about people, especially poor people having a say in the decisions that affect their lives."⁵⁰ An important part of

⁴⁶ Sharon Sims Cox, "My Life In MOVE"(as told to Carol Saline) *Philadelphia Magazine*, September 1985 pg. 17-72, Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia

⁴⁷ Will Bunch, "An Inauspicious Beginning" *Philadelphia Daily News* May 6, 2010 www.philly.com (accessed April 16, 2016)

⁴⁸ Testimony of Louise James, MOVE Commission Hearings, Urban archives, 11/01/85 p. 43-44 <https://library.temple.edu> (accessed: April 18, 2016)

⁴⁹ Sharon Sims Cox, "My life in MOVE" p. 169

⁵⁰ Jim Quinn, "The Making of a Mover," *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 10, 1978 p.26

his graduate thesis entitled “Citizen Participation and the Poor,” was based on his own experience working in New Jersey poverty programs during summer vacations.⁵¹ Not unlike other young persons that came of age during the height of the counter culture movement, Glassey was searching for a deeper meaning to existence and life’s purpose. “I was trying to find out some things, I realized it wasn’t happening with different religions, so I went on to the next thing when I met a short, very friendly black man who spoke of a strange philosophy... I soon became fascinated”⁵² As Glassey began to spend more and more time with Leaphart he came to believe that “this was the first man that I met who was living in complete harmony with his beliefs.”⁵³ Glassey recollected that Leaphart’s basic philosophy was “that the world was beset with problems and the analysis was because humanity was not living in harmony with natural laws and natural principles and if mankind just gradually returned to living in harmony with nature, that gradually our problems would be solved.”⁵⁴ Additionally, Glassey understood Leaphart’s claim “that if one is working toward living in harmony with nature, then one would never let animals be exploited in any way.”⁵⁵

Soon after becoming entirely enthralled with the orations of Vincent Leaphart, Donald Glassey took to task an almost year -long project of formally consolidating the sometimes scatter-shot philosophy of the neighborhood “dog-man” into a several hundred page book that became known as *The Guidelines*.⁵⁶ While Leaphart dictated, Glassey

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Murray Durbin, “Revolution Ain’t Verbalized” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 9, 1980, p. A14

⁵⁴ George E. Curry, “MOVE: A Back-to-Nature Group Whose Nature Remains an Enigma” *Chicago Tribune*, May 19, 1985 [http:// articles.chicagotribune.com](http://articles.chicagotribune.com) (accessed April 20, 2016)

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ McCray, “Who Was John Africa?” 24.

tirelessly made notes and then typed and edited a treatise that championed “natural law,” the right to self-defense, the dismantling of the world system, the pitfalls of materialism, the history of government oppression, the importance of family, and the root causes of addiction, disease, racism, crime and war.⁵⁷ Leaphart expounded to Glassey his core belief, “The government, the military and big business have historically abused, raped and bartered life for the sake of money. They don’t care who they kill, enslave, cripple, poison or disease.”⁵⁸ Crafting a formal manifesto was certainly the standard for counter culture groups of the era. It can be argued that Leaphart with the assistance of Donald Glassey was indeed modeling the formulations of his contemporaries. For example, historian Van Gosse explains, “In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was a significant revival of Marxism across the New Left. Activists were digging in for the longer haul, looking past the immediacy of the Vietnam War and imagining a different America.”⁵⁹ Examples can be seen in the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) publication, *The Port Huron Statement* which pontificated “Mans unfulfilled capacities for reason, freedom, and love and human relations,” and the jettisoning of “Man’s potentiality toward violence, unreason, and submission to authority.”⁶⁰ Van Gosse attests that the counter culture groups of the time regularly described their desires as “authentic and passionate for the real and natural rather than the processed and the synthetic. The old world was thought of as thoroughly corrupt, and that revolution and a new world were just around the corner.”⁶¹ Likewise, the revered guru of the New Left, Herbert Marcuse,

⁵⁷ “About MOVE: Belief and Practice” The official web site of the MOVE Organization on onamove.com (accessed April 30, 2016)

⁵⁸ Excerpts of *The Guidelines* in Ibid.

⁵⁹ *Re-Thinking The New Left*, 194.

⁶⁰ *The Port Huron Statement* in Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines eds., *Taking It To The Streets: A Sixties Reader* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 53-54.

⁶¹ Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretive History* 203, 208.

argued that “nature itself, ever more effectively controlled, has in turn become another dimension for the control of man.”⁶² These ideas definitely resonated with Leaphart.

Upon completion of the so- called “*The Guidelines*,” Glassey began incorporating Leaphart’s philosophy of black consciousness, anti-capitalism, and humanism, into the evening classes which he taught at Philadelphia Community College.⁶³ Vincent’s sister, Louise Leaphart- James recollected an early evening phone call: “Vincent said, Lou?...Louise? Guess what? I wrote a book and they are teaching it at Community College! I was in a state of shock. My brother had written a book and it was actually being taught in college. Of even more significance... this brother!”⁶⁴ Leaphart’s family members were of course bewildered by their brother who struggled with literacy throughout his life and hitherto never was thought of as someone who possessed the ability to analyze anything, let alone formulate a world view. “After coming to know Vincent’s uncanny skills, I am painfully aware of how hurt my brother must have been when we got mad at him and said he was in the ‘odd ball’ class or how hurt my mother and father had to be knowing one of their children was seen as slow and functionally illiterate”⁶⁵

Regardless of how Leaphart’s immediate family initially reacted after reviewing *The Guidelines*, Glassey’s Community College classes were gaining steady popularity and were now being augmented by personalized study sessions headed by both Glassey and Leaphart. “Vincent told us he had no problem with us questioning him , in fact he

⁶² Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972) 60.

⁶³ Leaphart James, *John Africa* 47.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 20.

expected it, and wanted for us to further our understanding.”⁶⁶ The original “Vinnie’s Gang” had now grown into varied consortium of people, most of whom were black. According to one of Leaphart’s cohorts, membership was culled “from all backgrounds in life... college students, businessmen, ex-prostitutes, career women, registered nurses. The thing that drew us all together was that we were looking for answers.”⁶⁷

The Guidelines served as a spring board for the early MOVE sessions that touched on a variety of themes such as economic exploitation and gender equality⁶⁸ Glasey and Leaphart’s jointly administered seminars were akin to other study or “rap sessions” that became common place and well attended throughout the black communities during the surge of black radicalism in the late 1960s.⁶⁹ Captivated audiences attending such study sessions during this era were furnished with political and pragmatic instruction which often emphasized class struggle, Black Nationalist consciousness, social justice and the pursuit of a more inclusive democracy.⁷⁰

In fact, Leaphart’s emerging solidarity with the African independence movement was pronounced through lectures that often communicated “the raping, plundering, murdering, and enslaving of an entire black nation.”⁷¹ His oratory during many other study sessions also reflected the thrust of other contemporaneous Black Power activists who demanded that American society essentially needed to be completely revamped and

⁶⁶ Louise James in *John Africa... Childhood Untold Until Today*, 51.

⁶⁷ Testimony of early MOVE member, Delbert Africa in Jim Quinn, “MOVE Considers Glassey a Judas,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 10, 1978, p. 8.

⁶⁸ Louise Leaphart James, *Childhood Untold...* 66.

⁶⁹ Peniel E. Joseph, “Black Studies, Student Activism, And The Black” Power Movement,” in *The Black Power Movement: Re-Thinking The Civil Rights-Black Power Movement* 252.

⁷⁰ Marable Manning, “Black Studies and the Radical Mountain,” *Souls* 2 (Summer 2000) 17-36.

⁷¹ *Childhood Untold...* 65.

reformed. At one session he pontificated, “Our ancestors the likes of Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Denmark Vesey, whose suffering, without question, went far beyond just being held captive... must still be dealt with fully!”⁷² Within a few months, Leaphart’s sisters Louise and Laverne eventually joined the ranks. And in time, he began referring to himself as “John Africa” in tribute “to the continent where all life began.”⁷³ Many of Glassey’s students along with some of Leaphart’s early disciples became the backbone of the Powelton Village Community Action Movement, an organization that eventually became known, simply as MOVE.⁷⁴

By the early 1970s, the MOVE organization grew to about sixty members and was augmented by approximately fifty supporters.⁷⁵ Members consisted mainly of blacks but also a few whites. However, all of the acolytes of the man now known as John Africa followed the example of their “coordinator” and also changed their surnames to Africa in homage to the well-spring of all life and as a sign of black solidarity and identification with the continent of Africa.⁷⁶

Apart from amending their sur names, the members of MOVE began to simulate the outward appearance of the Rastafari by growing their hair into dreadlocks while expropriating the Pan-African and Afro-centric political and social aspirations of Rastafarian faith, which was steadily imported into the United States via Reggae

⁷² Ibid. 77.

⁷³ Quoted by Donald Glassey in John Anderson and Hilary Hevenor, *Burning Down The House* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1987) 4.

⁷⁴ Will Bunch, “An Inauspicious Beginning” *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 6, 2010 www.newspapers.com (accessed April 16, 2016)

⁷⁵ Kitty Caparella, “Will MOVE Rise Again?” *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 24, 1986, p. 19.

⁷⁶ Sharon Sims Cox, “My life in MOVE,” p. 171.

musicians the likes of Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and others during the early 1970s.⁷⁷ In spite of the fact that many “designer dread”⁷⁸ wearing, middle class youths of the time resigned themselves only to the superficial stylistic appointments of the Rasta while enjoying the “rid’ems” of Reggae music, the young members of Philadelphia’s MOVE organization had much more in common with “the disposed, belligerent, and hopeless youth of Kingston who felt left behind by their colonial government in Jamaica.”⁷⁹ Undoubtedly, the nascent MOVE organization incorporated many attributes of the Rastafarian’s contemporaneous commercial surge. Predominately, MOVE members’ physical attributes mirrored “The natty-haired, dreadlocked followers of Rastafari or ‘Rastas’ who sought to reclaim their black heritage in the African diaspora with regard to black religion, black pride and being in the world.”⁸⁰ As demonstrated in *The Guidelines* John Africa ostensibly used Rastafarianism as a touchstone when crafting MOVE dogma. Most evident in his shared belief in the “sacramentality of nature” and in the concept that human beings are called to protect the environment by conserving energy, reducing pollution, and eating natural foods.⁸¹ According to J.M. Floyd Thomas,

As both MOVE and Rastafarianism emerged during periods in the twentieth century that were marked by heightened expressions of black nationalism, intense labor upheavals and anti-imperialist struggles both MOVE and Rastafarianism represented similarly powerful and subversive forms of cultural rebellion, naturalist philosophy, and African-centered utopianism among disposed people of color. In addition, the philosophy of MOVE, like Rastafarianism

⁷⁷ Nathaniel Samuel Murrell ed., *Chanting Down Babylon: the Rastafarian Reader* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998) 342-343.

⁷⁸ Rex Nettleford, “Discourse on Rastafarian Reality” in *Ibid* 11.

⁷⁹ *Ibid* 5.

⁸⁰ Rex Nettleford, “Discourse on Rastafarian Reality” in Nathaniel Samuel Murrell ed., *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafarian Reader* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998) 11.

⁸¹ *Ibid*. 11.

reflected a historic shift within black religiosity towards the spiritual needs and urgent realities of the black masses.⁸²

Much like the Rastas, the members of MOVE reserved the right “to think, know, name, reinterpret and define their essence and existence.”⁸³ And while the Rastafari proceeded to “chant down Babylon” or in essence strive for the apocalyptic end to the corrupt world of colonialism, MOVE remained committed to dismantling and destroying racism, economic disparity and police brutality within its’ own urban surroundings.

While many casual observers and academics the likes of Floyd-Thomas were able to draw parallels between MOVE and Rastafarianism, quite a few of the youngest members of John Africa’s retinue didn’t necessarily make the same connections and instead sustained their conviction that the MOVE doctrine was singularly distinctive. Debbie Sims Africa, for example, claims, “I don’t believe that MOVE was influenced by Rastafarianism, while other beliefs or philosophies may seem similar, MOVE’s belief is one, unparalleled to any other belief existing. Others deal in categories and separation. MOVE’s is one of communion.”⁸⁴

Regardless of how John Africa’s neophytes were interpreting his doctrine, the MOVE group’s inclination towards the spiritual and immaterial should be considered nothing short of a natural process, due in part to their new-found leader’s early Christian upbringing and later exposure to the Kingdom of Yahweh and black Philadelphia’s rich

⁸² J.M. Floyd-Thomas, “The Burning of Rebellious Thoughts: MOVE as Revolutionary Black Humanism,” *The Black Scholar*, (Spring 2002)13.

⁸³ Rex Nettleford, “Discourse on Rastafarian Reality,” in the *Rastafarian Reader* 5.

⁸⁴ Quoted by Debbie Sims Africa of the MOVE 9 to author.

tradition of religious groups that adopted varied liberation theologies. Delbert Orr suggested, “In many ways John Africa resembles Jesus Christ, who was also a carpenter and lived a very simple life.”⁸⁵ Moreover, it must be noted that Philadelphia’s African-American community has long exhibited a rich tradition of religiosity, especially when faced with extreme adversity.⁸⁶ During the post-WWII era, black clergy moved to the fore to serve as examples for the growing black consciousness. Notably, Father Paul Washington’s congregation, The Church of the Crucifixion became the location for some of the most heated discourse regarding the paltry opportunities afforded black Philadelphians.⁸⁷ In a similar fashion, the Nation of Islam, which had been operating on the periphery of the cities’ religious communities for most of the 1950s, received a steady stream of converts after two-thousand Muslims and another fifteen-hundred spectators greeted the prophet, Elijah Muhammad upon his first visit to Philadelphia.⁸⁸ Moreover, “in the late 1960s and early 1970s black clergy began to develop a black theology that found God’s presence primarily among the poor, the oppressed and the outcast.”⁸⁹ Paul M. Washington, claimed, “We (the church leadership) wanted to see whether a WASP

⁸⁵ 1976 Interview of Delbert Orr Africa for WHYY-12 T.V. See *Let The Fire Burn*, www.youtube.com (accessed December 14, 2017)

⁸⁶ Robert S. Gregg, *Sparks From The Anvil of Oppression: Philadelphia’s African Methodist and Southern Migrants, 1890-1940* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993) 2. Upon building “Mother Bethel”, the first church of the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E) denomination in 1816, founder Richard Allen effectively severed all ties to the white Methodists of Philadelphia who had subjected their black counterparts to institutional racism.

⁸⁷ Paul M. Washington, *Other Sheep I Have: The Autobiography of Father Paul M. Washington* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994) 72.

⁸⁸ Charles Shorter, “3,500 Hear Muhammad Demand Justice For Colored,” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, August 6, 1960 pp. 1.

⁸⁹ Peter J. Paris, *The Spirituality of African Peoples: The Search for a Common Moral Discourse* ((Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995) 152.

denomination could minister meaningfully and effectively to Negroes, in particular those who were handicapped by unemployment and poor education.”⁹⁰

In part, MOVE became a religious or spiritual organization that viewed natural law and nature as more supreme than a Christian God or universal force, even though members viewed John Africa in a god-like manner. After becoming informed by *The Guidelines*, most MOVE members began referring to their newly adopted world view as a religion in of itself. Lavern Sims reasoned, “MOVE’s belief is life, natural law. We don’t believe in man’s reform world system. Life, natural law, which is synonymous with God, made pure air, clean water, fertile soil, and made the principal of freedom, equality for all life without prejudice.”⁹¹ Another early MOVE disciple named Ramona Africa gave witness, “We are bound to MOVE law, to our religion, to John Africa by the love John Africa gives us.”⁹² Religion as a model for MOVE was certainly part of John Africa’s aims. In one particular interview, when asked if he knew anything about the Christian faiths, John Africa replied in the affirmative. When interviewing John Africa, Walter Wasyluk recalled, “I used an example of the four Evangelists who, through divine inspiration, wrote four of the books of the New Testament. I also mentioned the Catholic Church, in which the Pope, when speaking on the matter of dogma, was considered infallible by believers. Mr. Leaphart (John Africa) stated that his position in MOVE was something like my given examples, but not exactly.”⁹³

⁹⁰ *Other Sheep I Have*, 25.

⁹¹ MOVE member Lavern Sims quoted in *The MOVE Crisis in Philadelphia* 10.

⁹² MOVE member Ramona Africa quoted in *Ibid.*, 17.

⁹³ Interview with John Africa by ATF special agent Walter Wasyluk in *United States of America vs. Vincent Leaphart*, p.2. 139 Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library library.temple.edu (accessed March 10, 2016)

John Africa's philosophy may very well have been a distinct break from the Christian tradition. Nevertheless, his directive seemingly fulfilled the spiritual needs of early MOVE converts such as Alberta Africa who recollected, "When MOVE people first joined, we were unhealthy, confused and had all kinds of problems; mental and physical and no solution. John Africa gave MOVE the solution to all our problems. He gave us the wisdom of understanding life's law."⁹⁴

Sharon Sims Cox sheds light on her induction into MOVE:

Why did people get involved with MOVE? They were looking for spiritual satisfaction. Soon I learned to be satisfied with what I needed and not what I wanted. I felt at peace. I became so strong and secure that I could confront the whole world. The more I hung around, the more that MOVE became my life, my existence. I didn't feel inferior anymore. I didn't have to be pushed around and accept things.⁹⁵

While the emergent MOVE group's membership increased and their formal doctrine began to coalesce, the Federal Bureau of Investigation with the assistance of local police units across the U.S. stepped up surveillance on various members of black militant groups with the aims of crushing the larger Black Power movement.⁹⁶ The FBI forged a highly effective collaboration with the Philadelphia police department which was unwavering in its position against civil rights. The invigorated assault against black militancy in Philadelphia led to the dismantling of the local chapter of the Black Panther Party and in turn propelled MOVE to adopt the ultra-radical position that endowed them their notoriety.

⁹⁴ Alberta Africa quoted in "My Life in MOVE" p. 171.

⁹⁵ Sharon Sims Cox quoted in Ibid.

⁹⁶ See Yohuru Williams, "A Red, Black And Green Liberation Jumpsuit" in Peniel E. Joseph ed., *The Black Power Movement* 167-191.

Chapter 3

The Decline of the Local Black Panther Party and the Advent of MOVE

There I was in the 1970s, a bored, slightly petit bourgeois, burnt-out ex Panther who distrusted organizations and still simmered in a stew of general rebellion. I felt all dressed up with no place to go. The Panthers, to whom I had loaned my life were sputtering in an internecine, bi-coastal and bloody feud. The prospect of us fighting one another sickened me. Bitterly, I told myself that I would never join another organization. For a time, nothing happened. Then I met MOVE.⁹⁷ – Mumia Abu Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 1996

While the advent of MOVE intersected with the impassioned under current of the late 1960s and early 70s, the group simultaneously ascended along with a new host of “Third World peoples” coalitions who drew incentive from the Black Power struggle.⁹⁸ Regrettably, after witnessing the escalation of the War in Vietnam and the slayings of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., the New Left coalition soon splintered and ultraist factions the likes of the Black Liberation Army, the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacional (FALN), and the Weathermen soon sprung to the fore. In particular, the SDS splinter group, the Weathermen positioned itself as the vanguard of a new revolution, all the while advocating guerilla warfare as a tactic for undermining what they viewed as a system rife with corruption.⁹⁹ Many of the early optimistic counterculture activists had become fraught with disillusion and despair, and the Black Panther Party began to unravel from the inside out. However, many of the radical leftist groups,

⁹⁷ Mumia Abu Jamal, *Live From Death Row* (New York: Perennial, 1996) 152.

⁹⁸ Van Gosse, *Rethinking The New Left* 131-152.

⁹⁹ Alexander Bloom and Wini Breins eds., *Takin' It To The Streets* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 385.

particularly the BPP were viewed by the newly elected Nixon administration as real and imminent threats to U.S. national security.

In fact, successful efforts to neutralize them by the federal government precipitated their decline, and the Black Panthers, who ventured to represent the collective voice of Black America, were soon faced with a series of tribulations that were causal for their demise. As a result, Black Panther Party chapters, including the Philadelphia outpost, were shuttered nation-wide. On a local level at least, MOVE seemed poised to become the Panther's inheritors.

The members of the MOVE organization in many ways resembled other firebrands of the Black Freedom Struggle. They were predominately young and black, and having been raised in a de-industrialized, post-war city under the boot-heels of a racist police department, their radicalism was certainly exasperated. As Peniel Joseph points out, the multi-layered roots of Black Power was reflected in the politics of broad range of historical actors and organizations such as black nationalists.¹⁰⁰ In short, MOVE's revolutionary black humanism underscores the eclectic nature of Black Power organizations.

COINTELPRO and the Philadelphia BPP

In the autumn of 1968, the Black Panther Party made its first appearance in the city. Local party founder Terry McHarris issued a statement which proclaimed, "The Black Panthers seek an end to white robbery of the black community, an end to police brutality,

¹⁰⁰ Peniel E. Joseph, ed., *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 279.

murder of black people, trial by jury of black peer, land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.”¹⁰¹ The formation of the first Black Panther chapter in Philadelphia renewed, invigorated and consolidated the often-fractured efforts of Black Power activists. Mumia Abu Jamal recalls, “While being beaten by two white men, one kicking my skull, the other kicking my balls, I lay on the ground and looked up. I could make out the gold trimmed pant leg of a Philly cop. Reacting from years of brainwashing, I yelled “HELP POLICE!” The cop marched over briskly and kicked me in the face. I am today thankful to that cop because he kicked me straight into the Black Panther Party.”¹⁰²

Although the Black Panthers chiefly focused on police brutality and the natural right to self- defense, they also employed peaceful methods of activism such as selling the party newspaper, organizing demonstrations, and sponsoring free breakfast programs for children in impoverished sections of Philadelphia.¹⁰³ By and large, the Black Panthers were considered a non-violent movement.¹⁰⁴ Former Black Panther Mumia Abu Jamal explains, “We spoke at antiwar rallies. We attended school meetings. We met with high-school students. We met in churches. We worked with gangs and provided transportation to area prisons. Everywhere we went we bought along the program and the platform of the Black Panther Party, as a guideline for our organizing efforts.”¹⁰⁵ The Black Panthers

¹⁰¹ Larry Geller, “Black Panthers Unit Brands Branch and Jerimiah X Fronts” *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 12, 1968 p.13

¹⁰² Testimony of Mumia Abu Jamal after being assaulted of George Wallace’s campaign stop in Philidelphia, 1968 in Mumia Abu Jamal, *Live From Death Row* (New York: Perennial Books, 1995) 150-151.

¹⁰³ Matthew Countryman, *Up South*, 286-287.

¹⁰⁴ Father Paul Washington, *Other Sheep I Have*, 126-127.

¹⁰⁵ Testimony of Mumia Abu Jamal in Mumia Abu Jamal, *We Want Freedom* (Cambridge Mass.: South End Press, 2004) 62.

and other advocates of Black Power believed that they possessed the best strategies as well as the standard of lucidity required to break America's addiction to racism.¹⁰⁶ For young Philadelphia activists the likes of Mumia Abu Jamal, the requisite action plan that was demanded invariably played out on the sullied streets of their own hometown.

By November 1968, the Black Panther Party had become sufficiently active to draw the attention of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Program). The Panther's along with "any coalition of militant black nationalist factions" held the number one slot among five targeted groups that the FBI sought to dismantle.¹⁰⁷ FBI director J. Edgar Hoover declared, "The Black Panther Party, without question, represents the greatest threat to the internal security of this country."¹⁰⁸ A full on assault was levied against the Panthers as the Bureau elicited the assistance of local law enforcement agencies across the United States. In due time, the Philadelphia Police Department acquiesced under the direction of Commissioner Frank Rizzo and formed the Civil Disobedience Unit.¹⁰⁹ The unit's prime goal was to "monitor and handle all types of racial incidents and demonstrations."¹¹⁰ During Rizzo's three- year tenure as commissioner, dossiers were compiled on 600 organizations including the Black Panthers and over 18,000 people which were in turn shared with the FBI and other government agencies.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Countryman, 330.

¹⁰⁷ "Initiating letter of COINTELPRO" in *Taking It To the Streets: A Sixties Reader* 318.

¹⁰⁸ "A Huey P. Newton Story" www.pbs.org (accessed May 10, 2016)

¹⁰⁹ Fred Hamilton, *Rizzo* (New York: Viking Press, 1973) 109.

¹¹⁰ Testimony of Officer John Cresci, Move Commission Hearings, 10/ 08/85 p.m.

¹¹¹ *Rizzo*, 109.

Duplicitous and disruptive paramilitary style tactics were also launched against the Black Panther Party almost immediately after their Philadelphia chapter was founded. Notably, following a deadly shoot- out in August of 1970 between police and some black youths, who claimed no affiliation with Panthers, the Philadelphia police justified raiding three Black Panther branch offices in retaliation.¹¹² “Mumia Abu- Jamal remembers: “I froze in the street while I watched two white men dressed in military fatigues kick the front door in at the Panther office. My partner yelled ‘Yo, somebody is breaking in to the office!’ One of the men turned back our way with a .38 special and yelled ‘Freeze, nigger! If you fuckin’ blink, I’ll blow your black goddamn head off your shoulders!’ Soon they were throwing files and papers into the street.”¹¹³

The most infamous of these police raids was covered on the front cover of the tabloid, *The Philadelphia Daily News*. The story accompanied a photo of naked Black Panthers arms outstretched and positioned against a wall hit the streets only hours after the raids took place.¹¹⁴ The police maintained that the Panthers stripped voluntarily with the aims of being photographed. However, one of the Panthers recalls: “They just ripped the goddamn cloths off of everyone. They just snatched your pants down and took pictures of us like that. After we were taken to the police station, we were punched and beaten with a stick, but really I thought it would be a whole lot worse.”¹¹⁵ While the Philadelphia police force continued to humiliate and diffuse the local Black Panther chapter, they

¹¹² Ibid., 89. and Mumia Abu-Jamal, *We Want Freedom* 195.

¹¹³ Mumia Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1995) 156.

¹¹⁴ * As noted in *Rizzo*, 90. For an example of nation-wide circulation of this infamous photo and article see Donald Janson, “Panthers Raided in Philadelphia,” *The New York Times* Sept 1, 1970 A-1. archivefeedbackwww@nytimes.com

¹¹⁵ Testimony of Black Panther defense captain Reggie Schell in Dick Cluster ed., *They Should Have Served That Cup of Coffee: 7 Radicals Remember the ‘60s* (Boston: South End Press, 1979) 65.

failed miserably when conveying a positive endorsement of their own home town. The photo circulated to major newspapers across the country and the story continued to hold sway for almost an entire year.¹¹⁶

In spite of the botched police attempt to knock Black Panther operations off base in Philadelphia, the FBI stepped up its COINTELPRO program and did everything in its power to continuously disrupt the Black Panthers, nation- wide.¹¹⁷ FBI documents were prepared pinpointing Panthers as police or FBI informants; ridiculing or discrediting Black Panther leaders through their ineptness or personnel escapades; promoting factionalism among BPP members and revealing misuse or misappropriations of funds etc.¹¹⁸ One schismatic method employed against the Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party included proffering fraudulent claims of rank and file misconduct to the Black Panther national headquarters. The fallacious documents stated that members of the Philadelphia Black Panther chapter regularly “stole food, clothing and drugs collected for community programs”¹¹⁹ As a result, the national office was prompted “to seriously consider closing the Philadelphia chapter.”¹²⁰ The corrosive effects of COINTELPRO certainly expedited the demise of the Black Panther Party. However, the Revolutionary People’s Constitutional Convention held in Philadelphia on September 5-6, 1970 probably served as the Black Panther’s swan-song.¹²¹ In his speech to the convention, Huey Newton, the party’s symbolic and ideological leader failed to connect to most of

¹¹⁶ Donald Janson, “Panthers Raided In Philadelphia,” *The New York Times*, September 1, 1970 A-1.

¹¹⁷ Mumia Abu-Jamal, *We Want Freedom*, 206.

¹¹⁸ An FBI memo in David Hilliard and Donald Weise, eds., *The Huey Newton Reader* (New York: Seven Stories, 2002) 346-347.

¹¹⁹ Memo to Philadelphia field office, August 19, 1970 in Huey P. Newton, *War Against the Panthers: A Study of Repression in America* (New York: Harlem River, 1996) 58.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ *Up South Philadelphia*, 288.

the party's membership.¹²² Over the course of the next two years Philadelphia's Black Panther chapter dwindled to about twenty-five members.¹²³

The nascent MOVE collective had similar objectives to the BPP that made it attractive to former members of the party who joined the organization after the demise of the Philadelphia chapter. John Africa routinely spoke out against police brutality and corruption in the city. "We are not out there fighting cops for the sake of fighting cops. Those cops are fighting us, and they are fighting us because they want to uphold this industry."¹²⁴ And after the eventual arrest and imprisonment of MOVE members, the organization would fully embrace the BPP's position on releasing political prisoners, one of the demands of the party's ten-point plan. Indeed, many of the city's young black activists soon began to view MOVE as a viable alternative to the now nearly moribund Black Panthers. Paul Wahrhaftig, who co-authored the 1990 work, *The MOVE Crisis in Philadelphia: Extremists Groups and Conflict Resolution*, contends that, "The origins of MOVE began in the tradition of the more progressive leftist groups like the Black Panthers and other similar groups that were emerging. MOVE was a variant."¹²⁵ The founder of Philadelphia's first AME church, Father Paul Washington remembered "Of the different strands that came together to form the MOVE family in the late 1960s and

¹²² Ibid., 289

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ "John Africa Versus the System," *The First Day* (official MOVE organization letter) pp.1. Temple University Libraries Special Collections Research Center, Box 1129, Folder 12.

¹²⁵ Will Bunch, "An Inauspicious Beginning" *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 6, 2010, www.philly.com (accessed April 16, 2016)

early 1970s, one was certainly the frustration of young black men and women who had identified with earlier movements for justice that they thought was revolutionary.”¹²⁶

Moreover, the demise of the Philadelphia arm of the Black Panther Party invigorated the police force who in turn showered a new torrent of violence downward onto the city’s black community. The Panthers had long endeavored to “end police brutality in the black community by organizing black self-defense groups that were dedicated to defending the black community from racist police oppression and brutality.”¹²⁷ The absence of the protection afforded by the BPP, in effect, was causal for MOVE’s appeal to increase manifold. A resident of Powelton Village named Jeanette Knighton, later known as Pam Africa, remembers:

Originally, I had no interest in politics, no interest in what was going on in Vietnam and absolutely no interest at all in activism. The nappy headed people that hung around Vinnie the neighborhood handyman, in my opinion, were just strange and unkempt. However, they were focused on police brutality and the disregard for the rights of the black community. I was completely transformed after returning home one evening with a group of friends from my youth group meeting. A squad of police stopped us for no apparent reason and began roughing up the boys. I told the cop that these boys were from my youth group and had done nothing wrong. After the harassment continued, I ask the one officer for his badge number then was immediately beat down.¹²⁸

Certainly the ever increasing violence which Philadelphia’s black community was subjected to at the behest of the police department fueled the fires of the Black Power radicalism during the latter half of 1960s and early 1970s. Comparably, the attraction black Philadelphians had for MOVE mirrored that of black southern communities who recruited local defense units throughout the duration of the Black Freedom Struggle. The

¹²⁶ Father Paul M. Washington, *Other Sheep That I Have*, 175.

¹²⁷ Objective No. 7 from “Black Panther Party 10-Point Program,” Huey Newton, *The Black Panther*, July 20, 1967, 5.

¹²⁸ Jeanette Knighton, a.k.a. Pam Africa, interview with the author 5/6/ 2017

historian, George Lipsitz underscores how localized defense units, “exhibited discipline and dedication and inspired the community. Their very existence made black people think more of themselves as people who could not be pushed around.”¹²⁹

MOVE’s local accessibility amid the dizzying array of counter-culture and activist groups that flourished at this time also served as an enticement. Francis “Phil” Phillips recalled, “With the Vietnam War going on, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Black Power Movement popping up, I realized my life was full of complexities. The different Black movements were not able to give me the direction I sought. I saw a difference in MOVE.”¹³⁰

Like the Black Panther Party, MOVE was very critical of the civil rights establishment and some left-wing progressive celebrities; its members did not refrain from using inflammatory language to criticize African American leaders they believed supported a corrupt system. In the opinion of MOVE, counterculture luminaries such as Jane Fonda, Tom Hayden and Jesse Jackson were nothing more than “tools of the system, who misguided the people with misinformation, offering only the problem and not the solution.”¹³¹ While touring nationally in 1972, Jane Fonda and Tom Hayden were forced to cut short their appearance at a University of Pennsylvania anti-war rally in which MOVE attended.

¹²⁹ George Lipsitz, *A Life In the Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988) 96.

¹³⁰ Francis “Phil” Phillips a.k.a. Phil Africa testimony on onamove.com (accessed: 5/10/2107)

¹³¹ MOVE Member Louise James in “MOVE Confrontation in Philadelphia” www.youtube.com (accessed February 24, 2016)

According to one eyewitness, “They (MOVE) came and were totally disruptive, Jane Fonda walked out, Tom Hayden walked out, everybody left.”¹³² Mumia Abu Jamal also bore witness to MOVE’s irascible nature at an event the following year. While working as a news director for talk radio station WHAT-AM, Abu Jamal was assigned to cover the national PUSH (People United to Serve Humanity) convention routinely held in center city Philadelphia. In attendance at the convention was the Reverend Jesse Jackson and the city’s black Christians arrived in waves to show support for the “country preacher.”¹³³ MOVE also arrived and protested in earnest. Abu Jamal recalled “Outside the convention, MOVE folks carried signs that read, THIS DUMB-ASS NIGGER IS BEGGING FAVORS FROM THE SAME SYSTEM THAT OPPRESSES HIM! Delbert Africa was shouting through a bullhorn giving Jesse hell, saying ‘If Jesse Jackson has got a solution, why ain’t he given’ it to everybody instead of selling it at twenty five dollars a seat? John Africa teaches us that the truth is free like the air we breathe. It ain’t to be sold.”¹³⁴ After the convention, Abu Jamal approached Jesse Jackson for an interview and asked what he thought about the commotion that MOVE made outside the venue. Jackson sneered, “I have an agenda for blacks in America, young man, an A-GEN-DA! Who cares about a bunch of dirty, unwashed niggas’ who don’t comb their hair?”¹³⁵

Activists and notable black leaders the likes of Jesse Jackson were incapable of taking the MOVE organization seriously. Ideological rifts have existed among other organizations of the Black Freedom Struggle. Notably, the NAACP chief, Roy Wilkins’

¹³² Quoted by unnamed attendee in Ibid.

¹³³ *Live from Death Row*, 156.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 157.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

out-right dismissal of Black Power,¹³⁶ and the Cleaver-Newton discord that served to split the Black Panther Party. While Huey Newton and his close associate Bobby Seal focused on self- defense and the various programs that the Panthers put forward, Eldridge Cleaver advocated for guerilla warfare and the full on assault of law enforcement. MOVE's early riff with Jesse Jackson was emblematic of this periodic friction within the freedom struggle.

Even though MOVE shared the BPP'S anti-capitalist agenda, it promoted a communist society that advocated internal and external revolution. John Africa's revolution was a revolution that sought to eradicate the "system" or the constructed paradigms of modern society. A MOVE revolutionary was expected to make a personal commitment to become sound in mind, body and spirit.¹³⁷ John Africa advised his followers to "turn, generate, and activate."¹³⁸ A number of ex-party members found their philosophy more appealing. Delbert Orr, for example, who originally belonged to a Black Panther chapter in his hometown of Chicago, remembers his attraction to MOVE upon arriving in Philadelphia. Orr recalled "John Africa impressed me with the surety of his knowledge and the clarity of the examples he was giving out. The Black Panthers never brought forth the true communist society they were preaching about. Although I had read Mao's Redbook, It wasn't until I read *The Guidelines* that I understood that you must first start with a personal revolution."¹³⁹ Orr's declaration of dissatisfaction with the

¹³⁶ See Yohuru Williams, "A Red, Black and Green Liberation Jumpsuit in Peniel E Joseph ed., *The Black Power Movement*, 179.

¹³⁷ "Being a Revolutionary" MOVE: Belief and Practice, On A MOVE: Website of the MOVE Organization <https://onamove.com> (accessed 7/12/20)

¹³⁸ As quoted by John Africa during his trial in *John Africa Childhood Untold Until Today* 87.

¹³⁹ Statement by Delbert Orr Africa in "Free the MOVE 9" onamove.com (accessed March 26, 2017)

Black Panthers apparent inability to bring about a “true communist society” reflected the mind set of many young black radicals of the time.

In contrast to the Black Panther’s rejection of cultural nationalism and the uninhibited embrace of African culture as a pathway to political freedom, MOVE’s dreadlock stylings, familial identity and back-to-nature sensibilities were in many ways enticing reasons to gain membership.¹⁴⁰ Orr found the eccentric new group akin to a breath of fresh air. He said, “What attracted me was the warmth and sincerity. It felt good to be with a bunch of people who were like family. They made me feel like I was somebody.”¹⁴¹ The structure of MOVE, and established titles such as Minister of Defense, Minister of Communication and Coordinator also appealed to Orr and other former members of the local BBP.¹⁴² Before his stint in the Black Panthers, Orr had completed a tour of duty with the U.S. Marine Corp. It was a natural transition Orr explained, “I liked armaments, discipline, power... All that.”¹⁴³ His penchant for military discipline eventually drew him close to the exacting John Africa, who was of course a veteran of the Korean War. After integrating himself with his new mentor, Orr also changed his surname to Africa. Eventually, his leadership ability earned him the position of Minister of Defense in the MOVE organization¹⁴⁴ Louise James, who had earlier doubted her brother, Vincent’s analytical adroitness was soon fully committed to her decision to join MOVE:

¹⁴⁰ Huey P. Newton, *To Die for the People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton* (New York: Writers and Readers, 1995) 92.

¹⁴¹ Delbert Africa, “My Life In MOVE,” p. 171.

¹⁴² onamove.com Website of the MOVE organization (accessed 7/16/20)

¹⁴³ Testimony of Delbert Orr Africa “Why I joined MOVE” onamove.com (accessed March 26, 2017)

¹⁴⁴ Onamove.com (accessed March 26, 2017)

Before I came to the MOVE organization, I was the type of person who had always looked for something that would help me find justice. I have never liked the injustice, the prejudice, the oppression of this system. However, I have never thought of myself as a leader, but I felt I could be a good follower. Because I felt that way I was constantly seeking out people to follow. Prior to MOVE for example, I followed and supported the Black Panther Party. I followed Angela Davis; I was mesmerized by that women. I thought she had it all together. I thought that she was just a brave, courageous black women with a purpose. I felt she had been misused and abused. I followed George Jackson. As I continued to see nothing working in this political system for me, I continued to search. When I came across the teachings of John Africa, my search ended.¹⁴⁵

John Africa's followers continued to take cues from the young romantics of the earlier counterculture movement who rejected the mainstream, industrialized society of post- WWII America in favor of a life of austerity and communal living. Even though MOVE shared similarities with the BPP, the organization 's rejection of industrialized society of post-WWII America in favor of a life of austerity and communal living had more in common with the hippie movement of the 1960s. In the late 1960s and early 1970s "hippie" communes cropped up mainly in the rugged and rural South Western United States. Dozens and in some cases, hundreds of idealistic young men and women conducted a social experiment of asceticism combined with a do-it- yourself ethos. Bands of so-called "drop-outs," many of whom were highly educated and engaged in a career decided to leave it all behind and move to these enclaves. Upon arriving on the commune, they put their shoulder to the wheel and planted crops, built houses, engaged in the arts, occasionally hired themselves out as day laborers, raised families and by-and large, decidedly lived contrary to societal expectations.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ The testimony of Louise James before the Philadelphia Special Investigation Commission in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 28, 1985 special edition

¹⁴⁶ Roberta Price, *Huerfano: A Memoir of Life in the Counterculture* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006) 101-106.

While Rachael Carson's 1962 publication *Silent Spring* was paramount to introducing environmental concerns to an enormous sector of the American public, the fierce determination of these commune dwellers and the fashioning of a lifestyle decidedly in harmony with nature motivated the modern environmental movement during this spirited time. In April of 1970, a consortium of civic leaders, business persons, professors and students organized the first "Earth Week" in Philadelphia's Fairmont Park. The event drew nearly sixty-thousand attendees and an array of celebrity activists the likes of Allen Ginsburg, Edmund Muskie and Ralph Nader only a stone's throw away from John Africa's neighborhood of Powelton Village.¹⁴⁷ However, it is evident that MOVE took their cues from contemporaries such as the Weathermen, who viewed the purported leadership of the leftist base as "too privileged and too corrupted by consumerism."¹⁴⁸ Weatherman co-founder, Howard Machtinger recalled, "White people were self-indulgently tarrying and oppressed people were bearing the brunt of racism and imperialist power. Militant non-violence had fallen short, we felt that something more was needed"¹⁴⁹ MOVE's advocacy for communion with nature and opposition to modern technology situates the organization firmly within the broader counterculture movements of this period.

In the winter of 1973, the extended family of MOVE decided it was necessary to begin living cooperatively. John Africa's adjunct Donald Glassey accommodated the group by purchasing a spacious three-story Victorian house on Thirty-third St. in

¹⁴⁷ The formation of the First Earth Week in Philadelphia 1970, <http://earthweek1970.org> (accessed December 16, 2016)

¹⁴⁸ Howard Machtinger, "You Say You Want A Revolution," *In These Times*, (February 18, 2009) inthesetimes.com (accessed August 15, 2017)

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

Powelton Village for a little less than \$8000.¹⁵⁰ The collective, along with dozens of dogs and cats made their home inside Glassey's acquisition with the intent of living according to John Africa's philosophy.¹⁵¹ The members of MOVE immediately began to busy themselves supporting their new home and life style by selling fruits and vegetables, shoveling snow, and washing cars.¹⁵² Since they opposed modern technology, they also chopped wood for their old Victorian fireplace instead of purchasing fuel. Charles Sims Africa explained, "We don't believe in heating the house, but we recognize we got to. And wood is less high on the technology scale than oil and gas."¹⁵³ MOVE's decision to live communally on their own terms was in many ways identical to their counterparts in the rural Southwest. Community activist Bernie Swans recalls, "Although MOVE had grown out of the revolutionary period of blacks in this country, it also talked about a different value system, the desire to free themselves both in mind and spirit from the system. Group living became a vehicle."¹⁵⁴ In contrast to other communistic societies of their time, MOVE insisted to forgo the use of all drugs whether illicit or prescribed.¹⁵⁵ Roberta Price, author of *Huerfano: A Memoir of Life in the Counterculture*, gives testament to the few years she and her husband spent on a southern Colorado commune, often "stoned and drunk."¹⁵⁶ Price was certainly not alone in her experiences. Marijuana use exploded amongst the counterculture, as did the use of psychedelics as a means of expanding one's conscience.¹⁵⁷ However, according to John Africa's *Guidelines*, MOVE

¹⁵⁰ *Burning Down The House*, 4.

¹⁵¹ Jim Quinn, "The Heart Of Darkness," *Philadelphia Magazine* 69, no. 5 (May 1978): 240

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Bernie Swans of Philadelphia's Crisis Intervention Network, MOVE Commission Hearings, 10/09/85, p. 45.

¹⁵⁵ "The MOVE Organization" <http://onamove.com/JohnAfrica> accessed March 10, 2016

¹⁵⁶ *Huerfano: A Memoir of Life in the Counterculture*, 173.

¹⁵⁷ *The Hippies and American Values*, 23-51.

members were expected to abstain from intoxicating substances. The use of drugs, alcohol and cigarettes were prohibited as they were considered an extension of the corrupt system that MOVE was attempting to distance themselves from. Louise Leaphart James recalls a lecture John Africa gave to the congregation: “There is no such thing as drug abuse. Fact is drugs abuse people. And not only do drugs abuse and hurt people, they kill people.”¹⁵⁸ Instead of using intoxicating substances members of MOVE were encouraged to engage in a rigorous regimen of physical activity running many miles through the city parks with weighted nap-sacks on their backs.¹⁵⁹ One member of MOVE claimed, “I am now 31 years of age and my health is incredible. I can run thirty-five miles.”¹⁶⁰ The teachings of John Africa were the only gospel they followed, and early members were encouraged to socialize with only those who belonged to the MOVE family.¹⁶¹ To many casual observers, the MOVE group appeared to be a strange “back to nature cult.”¹⁶² However, the groups’ “coordinator,” John Africa, argued stridently that, “MOVE is NOT a cult. It is an organization!”¹⁶³ MOVE formally declared that they were a “deeply religious organization totally committed to the principle of our belief as taught to us by our founder John Africa.”¹⁶⁴

In contrast to the Weathermen and other radical groups, MOVE insisted that men and women remain equal within the organization. Feminists, the likes of Sara Evans, have been prone to levy scathing criticism on the many militant counterculture groups that

¹⁵⁸ John Africa... *Childhood Untold Until Today*, xiv.

¹⁵⁹ Tom Masland, “A group that chose to live on the brink,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 21, 1975, 3-B.

¹⁶⁰ Sue Africa quoted in “The Making of a Mover,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 9, 1978, p. 26

¹⁶¹ Onyekada, Ekeogu Joi, “The MOVE Organization”

¹⁶² Robin Wagner –Pacifi, *Discourse and Destruction*, 30.

¹⁶³ “John Africa Versus The System,” *The First Day*, (official MOVE organization newsletter) pp. 2. Temple University Libraries Special Collections Research Center, Box 1129 ,Folder 14.

¹⁶⁴ MOVE’s former declaration to the city of Philadelphia. In Ibid.

were contemporaries of MOVE. Evans observed, “The guise of sexual liberation offered men more power rather than granting women true sexual freedom.”¹⁶⁵ An example of this kind of chauvinism can be gleaned from Susan Stern’s recollection of her time spent as a member of the Weathermen. She observed, “The guys would drop into small-town U.S.A with their grinning good looks and their political palaver and just like any other superstar attract a bunch of shining little groupies... I couldn’t stand the thought of being just another piece of ass to SDS men.”¹⁶⁶ In contrast, MOVE women were considered bastions of strength and their roles were essential to the betterment of men within their adopted family unit.¹⁶⁷ John Africa’s insistence on the inclusion of both genders in the affairs of MOVE, proved to be attractive to woman activists who had hitherto struggled to find a voice in the struggle. Historian Kimberly Springer asserts “During the Black Power era, black women particularly encountered stumbling blocks in defining black feminism. In addition to black women’s relationships to black men, black women also longed for a feminism that would address their relationships to one another.”¹⁶⁸ When affirming MOVE’s inclusive stance toward women, John Africa declared: “Do women drink a different kind of water than men, breathe a different kind of air, feel a different kind of sun?.. Women are just as wise, just as godly, and just as important as men!”¹⁶⁹ Lavern Sims Africa’s recollection of her experience in MOVE affirms the equality of gender roles in the organization:

¹⁶⁵ Sara M. Evans, “The Rebirth Of Feminism,” in *Long Time Gone: Sixties America Then and Now*, Alexander Bloom (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 198.

¹⁶⁶ Laura Browder ed., *With the Weathermen: The Personal Journal of Revolutionary Women, Susan Stern* (New Brunswick New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2007) xx.

¹⁶⁷ “MOVE People Are Used to This” 95.

¹⁶⁸ Kimberly Springer, “Black Feminists Respond To Black Power,” in Peniel Joseph ed., *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006) 111.

¹⁶⁹ “About Women” from John Africa’s *Guidelines* in *John Africa... Childhood Untold Until Today* 61.

John Africa, founder of the MOVE organization has endowed each MOVE member with the principle of CARING and the principle of SHARING which does away with the so called “regulated roles.” In line with this, it is not strange to see a woman washing cars, chopping wood, working by her man’s side and engaging him in whatever he may be doing, both exhibiting the strong healthy outlook so prevalent in MOVE men washing clothes, preparing dinner or washing dishes. The fathers in MOVE spend as much time with children as the mothers.”¹⁷⁰ “MOVE exposed the uselessness of the prescribed gender and family roles that were practiced in their time. Move woman were portrayed as strong and able-bodied when compared to their male counterparts. Move women were portrayed as equal contributors in MOVE.”¹⁷¹

Delbert Orr Africa attested, “MOVE women are the most enduring members of our organization. I love working with and just being with them.”¹⁷²

Rejection of Modern Technology and Lifestyle

John Africa’s initial rejection of electricity and heating fuel served only as the inception of MOVE’s own ascetic world view, which was laced with a good deal of vitriol. It is unclear if the MOVE group co-opted ideals from philosophers the likes of Stewart Brand, Arne Naess and others who became monumentally influential to the droves of radicals and counterculture types who jettisoned consumerism and turned

¹⁷⁰ “On The Move,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, (October 21, 1975) p. 7.

¹⁷¹ “MOVE People Are Used To This,” 95.

¹⁷² Delbert Orr Africa’s testimony on onamove.com (accessed March 27, 2017)

toward a life of austerity.^{173 174 175 176} However, during the time of MOVE's emergence, some esoteric practitioners of "primitivism," went so far as to claim that technology was an "addiction" and that mankind must return to its original feral state through a process of "re-wilding."¹⁷⁷ His niece Sharon Sims Cox attested to his aims in a *Philadelphia Magazine* feature: "John Africa definitely hated the whole system. He wanted to get rid of everything. He wanted to tear up the black top and let food grow everywhere. He wanted to take animals out of zoos and put them back in their environment. He wanted to get back to a time when people were equal and nobody had more than anyone else."¹⁷⁸ The motivations of the iconoclastic MOVE leader were certainly driving past the Naess principle of "biogenic egalitarianism" and were more in line with the philosophy of his Primitivist contemporaries.

¹⁷³ Francis Lappe, *Diet For A Small Planet*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1971) and <http://www.wholeearth.com> (accessed December 20, 2016)

*Lappe's widely read book espoused the benefits of cultivating a diet that was both healthier for the individual and the earth.

¹⁷⁴ Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy 2nd 7/18/2008 pg. 206.

*"Anarcho-Primitivism" which claimed roots in classical Anarchism gained momentum after Cultural anthropologists such as Karl Paul Polanyi argued in the early 1970s that early hunter gatherer communities were the "original affluent societies."

¹⁷⁵ Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary." *Journal of Philosophy and Social Sciences* 16, 1973: 95.

* The founder of the "deep ecology movement" Naess and his cohorts differentiated themselves from the mainstream environmental movement which they believed to be a shallow and arrogant impulse of preserving the environment for the express purpose of sustaining human welfare. Naess argued strongly that all living organisms, whether flora or fauna, possessed the same intrinsic worth. The dominance of human beings over all other life forms, Naess contended, "has been the key feature of the European-North American intellectual tradition."

¹⁷⁶ See Jaques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964)

¹⁷⁷ John M. Gordy, *Limited Wants, Unlimited Means: A Reader on Hunter-Gatherer Economics* (New York: Island Press, 1997) 265.

¹⁷⁸ "My Life In Move," p. 172.

The cohabitating MOVE family rigorously employed the directives of their leader John Africa, who encouraged them to embark on a path toward asceticism. Their communal home in the Powelton Village section of Philadelphia was not only void of utilities such as electricity and heating fuel but also running water.¹⁷⁹ Members of MOVE were expected to sustain themselves on raw fruits and vegetables and spring water. Only a few foods were cooked on an outdoor grill to accommodate members in transition and who were not ready to renounce modern conveniences and live according to John Africa's recommended life style. Phil Africa informed a *Philadelphia Bulletin* reporter, "Everyone has to go at his or her own speed. We do not believe in cooked food but some guy's mothers have been feeding them cooked food for twenty years, they just ain't ready to give it up."¹⁸⁰ With the exception of a few chairs, a table and oddly enough a telephone the MOVE headquarters was spartan indeed.¹⁸¹

MOVE's back to basics sensibilities also extended toward personal hygiene and household waste disposal. Most MOVE members claimed to bathe frequently. However, because of their fear of chemicals they did so without the application of soap. MOVE member, Ted Africa exclaimed: "Take a bite out of a bar of soap and tell me how much you like it! If it's not good for one part of your body it's not good for any part of it."¹⁸² "We took baths all the time. We just didn't use soap or deodorant because it is full of chemicals. Strong body odor gets purified by our natural diet."¹⁸³ Attitudes towards cleanliness and the avoidance of soap were not atypical among other commune dwellers

¹⁷⁹ John T. Gillespie, "MOVE Rejects Modern Life-Style," *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, (April 8, 1975) p. 3.

¹⁸⁰ "The Heart of Darkness," 240.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Larry Eichel, "MOVE Members Speak Out Loudly and Often," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, (April 25, 1975) p. 1-B.

¹⁸³ "My Life In MOVE," 172.

of the era. Comparably, Roberta Price recalled her first introduction to the Huerfano Valley hippie community in Colorado. “Some are opposed to washing dishes with commercial dish liquids and insist on washing the dishes in the stream with sand. I can’t believe how crazy that is!”¹⁸⁴ Accordingly, refuse from the MOVE house was consolidated in the corner of the backyard. A substantial heap of eggshells, orange peels, corn cobs, and human fecal matter remained un-composted since MOVE members believed the natural course of action was to let garbage “Cycle” (re-cycle) back to its’ basic components.¹⁸⁵ Echoing the sentiments of the contemporaneous deep ecology and Primitivism movements, early member Don Africa explained: “Man has set himself above other forms of life because of a superiority complex, but there is no difference between your life and the tree out in the yard.”¹⁸⁶ And since MOVE believed that animals should be treated as humans, their brood of dogs and cats ran amok at their house in Powelton Village.¹⁸⁷

Even though MOVE’s unorthodox practices and austere living definitely distinguished them from radically conscious leftist groups like the BPP, they shared the party’s critique of the medical profession. However, in contrast to MOVE, the Black Panthers called for free health clinics and “health facilities which will not only treat our illnesses, most of which have come about as a result of our oppression, but which will also develop preventive medical programs to guarantee our future survival.”¹⁸⁸ For most of his adult life, John Africa also stridently renounced the modern medical profession due

¹⁸⁴ Roberta Price, *Huerfano* 192.

¹⁸⁵ “Move Rejects Modern Life Style” p.3.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ The Black Panther Party Research Project. Black Party Platform and Program. Available at: <http://web.stanford.edu/group/blackpanthers/history.shtml>. (accessed June 10, 2016)

in large part to his belief that doctors and hospitals were responsible for his mother's untimely and early death.¹⁸⁹ More than likely, his trepidations compelled him to discourage MOVE from utilizing modern medicine. Avoidance of doctors, hospitals and clinics extended to MOVE's practice of child birthing.¹⁹⁰ Home birthing was the norm on hippie communes during the era of MOVE. Yet the procedure was usually carried out in the presence of a mid-wife.¹⁹¹ In comparison, MOVE women, usually on the floor and comforted only by a bed of straw, gave birth the "natural way" without assistance.¹⁹² "People think it's such a complicated procedure" said Sue Africa, "but all it consisted of was that I felt pressure in my stomach and I instinctively knew to bear down and push... the baby flew on out. I severed the umbilical cord with my teeth and licked the baby clean. It's not at all hard to do it yourself."¹⁹³ The story of Sue Africa's home birthing practice ran in the Sunday addition of the *Philadelphia Bulletin*, and was one of the first times that MOVE drew the attention of the city government, namely The Department of Public Health.¹⁹⁴

John Africa's attention to "natural law" even extended to their childrearing practices as well. Children were encouraged to remain naked or under clothed even during winter months. And since MOVE parents intended to keep their children from being "contaminated by the system" they made no efforts of enrolling them in Philadelphia public schools.¹⁹⁵ "We didn't send our children to school because basically, reading and

¹⁸⁹ "Who Was John Africa?"

¹⁹⁰ Leslie Bennets, "She Says Natural Childbirth And Really Means It...But Doctor's Warn: Things Do Go Wrong," *The Sunday Bulletin*, August 10, 1975 p. 6

¹⁹¹ *Huerfano: A Memoir Of Life In The Counterculture*, 180-86.

¹⁹² "She Says Natural Childbirth And Really Means It." p.6

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ "MOVE Members Speak Out Loudly And Often"

writing is what got the system where it is today. Under natural law, when there were no books or no schools, everyone more or less depended on their natural ability to do things.”¹⁹⁶

MOVE adopted a revolutionary humanism that placed the oppression of black people on the same level as the captivity and mistreatment of animals; somewhat similar to radical animal rights activists today. The organization’s first contributions to the protest movement began at the Philadelphia Zoo and a variety of local pet stores.¹⁹⁷ “Initially, we actually demonstrated at the Philadelphia Zoo many times against the exploitation and caging of animals as this was part of John Africa’s philosophy.”¹⁹⁸

According to John Africa’s stance on captive animals, “They (animals) are as much enslaved as was our ancestors Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Nat Turner and others... as were the Jews at Auschwitz who under Adolf Hitler, were also victims of the atrocious.”¹⁹⁹ In time, MOVE began to make bolder strides toward forms of protest which drew an ever increasing flurry of media attention around the group. Famously, MOVE barged into the studios of KYW-TV and handcuffed daytime television talk show host Mike Douglas during one of his shows taping sessions.²⁰⁰

Mike Douglas recalled:

On one particular strange week we had a chimpanzee on as a guest, I said something like Ohhh! To the chimp, which, just set him off. He began to rampage around the studio and then ran backstage and tore everything apart. His handler hand cuffed the chimp in order to subdue him. Headlines in every media outlet read: ‘Chimp Goes Bananas.’ Later that week, we were beginning a show

¹⁹⁶Delbert Orr Africa quoted in “My Life In MOVE,” 171.

¹⁹⁷ “Who was John Africa?”

¹⁹⁸ Donald Glassey quoted in “Move: A Back to Nature Group Whose Nature Remains an Enigma”

¹⁹⁹ Excerpt of *The Guidelines* in *John Africa...Childhood Untold Until Today*, 77.

²⁰⁰ “Radical Group Protests”

on which Walter Cronkite was the co-host when two people who identified themselves from the Philadelphia group MOVE walked onto the set and handcuffed me to camera and demanded that the crew film them protesting the chimps ‘treatment.’ The MOVE members were forced to leave, the incident never made it on the air and I told Cronkite it was all a joke that our show’s producer played on me.²⁰¹

While the rights of animals were preeminent within John Africa’s *Guidelines*, the leader of MOVE also raged to his disciples about the pitfalls of the societal institution that failed him miserably, public education. Steeped in the activist tradition of civil rights and Black Power leaders, MOVE railed against the racist public education system and its negative impact on black children.

Soon after the kerfuffle at KYW-T.V., MOVE advanced their opposition to public education by becoming regulars at Philadelphia School Board meetings which they routinely disrupted with harangues such as one spewed by Delbert Orr Africa, “How are you (the school board) going to explain to all those minds that you hustled, prostituted and raped?”²⁰² Ted Africa retorted to the press, “We have got a whole lot to say about the public school system!”²⁰³

Condemnation of public education institutions had already become a hallmark of the Black Power Movement before MOVE joined the fray. Publications such as Harold Cruise’s *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* shaped the views of many black activists who came to believe that the educational system was a pivotal battleground of revolutionary struggle and contention.²⁰⁴ Moreover, the Black Power consciousness that swirled around MOVE’s local in Philadelphia had already resulted in numerous

²⁰¹ Mike Douglas in Rose De Wolf, “Mike’s Memories,” *The Philadelphia Daily News* (November 29, 1999) accessed: May 19, 2016 articles.philly.com

²⁰² Elizabeth A. Williams, “Radical Group Stops School Board Meeting,” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, (March 26, 1974 section G p. 4.

²⁰³ Larry Eichel, “MOVE Members Speak Out Loudly, And Often,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (April 21, 1975) E-1.

²⁰⁴ James Turner, “Black Students and their Changing Perspectives,” *Ebony*, August 1969, 135-40

demonstrations demanding Black curricula in the city's public schools.²⁰⁵ Delbert Orr Africa explained MOVE's position toward public education, "The school system teaches addition, subtraction, multiplication and ultimately... DIVISION! We believe in divorcing ourselves from the references that taught us racism and hate."²⁰⁶ Since, the school board meetings that MOVE often commandeered were routinely broadcast on Philadelphia's public television affiliate WHYY-TV, television sound was routinely cut off during the groups' obscenity laced tirades. Meetings were often quickly adjourned.²⁰⁷

The use of profanity during public demonstrations was used as a deliberate tactic to show MOVE's contempt for the "system."²⁰⁸ John Africa exclaimed, "Seeing the raping, plundering, murdering and getting upset when hearing a four letter word, protecting your son from profanity and sending him off to Vietnam, screening out profanity on television and then showing the massacre of Indians, watching the blood bath in the middle- east and you sit back and get concerned about a four letter word."²⁰⁹ "MOVE were allowed to continue protesting but were expected to keep it clean."²¹⁰ Jeffery Africa, a MOVE member explained, "If our profanity offends you, look around and see how destructively society is profaning itself. It is the rape of the land and it is the pollution of the environment that is the real obscenity."²¹¹ For members of MOVE, freedom of speech was not just a civil right it was a human right. Mumia Abu Jamal recalled, "While working as a program director for WWDB-FM, I hosted another talk show and decided to

²⁰⁵ Matthew Countryman, *Up South* 238.

²⁰⁶ Carol Rich, "Foes Call School Board 'Hustlers'" *The Evening Bulletin*, Tuesday, April 16, 1974 pg. 33.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ "Radical Group Protests"

²⁰⁹ Excerpt of *The Guidelines* in *John Africa... Childhood Untold Until Today*, 65.

²¹⁰ Quote by James McNally, Philadelphia City Solicitor in Ibid.

²¹¹ Jerry Africa quoted in Murry Dubin, "Revolution Ain't Verbalized," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, (May 9, 1975) Section A p. 14.

bring these MOVE nuts to my studio for an interview. It was a disaster! They took over the show. They kept on ranting yet wouldn't answer any of my questions. I couldn't speak on my own show."²¹² As MOVE's public profile expanded, most Philadelphian's remained in a state of utter confusion as to the true aims of MOVE. The liberal use of obscenities, while demonstrating earned MOVE their first injunction from the city of Philadelphia which ordered them to cease using profane language.²¹³ Much like other radicalized organizations of their time, MOVE members were soon subjected to police brutality under the nefarious leadership of Frank Rizzo.

MOVE Counters Rizzo's Treachery and Policing in Philadelphia

Predating the infamous 1965 Watts Riots by almost a year, the 1964 North Philadelphia riot exploded on the streets and became emblematic of the deep racial divide that had evolved in the city. At approximately 9:35 p.m. on Friday, August 28, 1964, two white Philadelphia police officers forcibly attempted to remove an uncooperative black woman from her automobile, which blocked an intersection.²¹⁴ A crowd of onlookers assembled around the fracas while a black man attacked one of the arresting officers. The besieged police officers were compelled to radio for support. Soon after more than a dozen more helmeted police arrived at the scene and arrested the woman and a male attacker. Although the crowd was successfully dispersed, the contingent of police was pelted with rocks, bottles and other projectiles.²¹⁵ After the arrests, a rumor spread throughout the community that a pregnant woman had been beaten and shot by the

²¹² *Live From Death Row*, 155.

²¹³ Dominic Sama, "MOVE Barred from Obscenities," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, (May 22, 1974) Section A p.20

²¹⁴ "Nobody Leads These People," *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, p.2.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

police. The hearsay effectively drove mobs of people into the streets to attack the police, loot local businesses and destroy property. After almost three days of mayhem, hundreds of persons were arrested, dozens were injured and a twenty-one year old man was shot and killed.²¹⁶ Moreover, the municipal and private property damage that accrued during the rioting was estimated at about three million dollars.²¹⁷ The destruction and violence that cascaded out onto the streets of Philadelphia during the summer of 1964 was the direct consequence of the systemic police brutality that was allowed to flourish in this city since the eighteenth century and later came to full fruition with the MOVE bombing in 1985.²¹⁸

African Americans in every urban center across the U.S. became enraged upon hearing of Martin Luther King Jr.'s murder in 1968. Riots erupted as blacks took to the streets with bricks, knives and guns, openly challenging police while destroying anything that remotely served as an emblem of oppression. Washington D.C. was locked down. Chicago's Mayor Daley gave direct orders to the police to "Shoot to kill rioters and shoot to maim looters."²¹⁹ Likewise, police commissioner, Frank Rizzo ordered Philadelphia's finest to arrest all blacks on the spot if they appeared on the streets after curfew.²²⁰ Local television crews filmed the many incidents of police brutality and subsequently showed the carnage on the evening news.

²¹⁶ Matthew Countryman, *Up South*, 175.

²¹⁷ "Gathering Storm: The Philly Riots of 1964," *The Philadelphia Inquirer* www.philly.com (accessed March 2, 2016)

²¹⁸ Suzaane Ife Williams, "Police Brutality: A Case Study Of Philadelphia/MOVE." "PhD. Diss., Atlanta University, 1988 Digital Commons@ Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center digital Commons.auctr.edu, 155.

²¹⁹ Hellium, Where Knowledge Rules, "The Immediate results of Kings Murder," <http://www.hellium.com> (accessed April 2, 2016)

²²⁰ S.A. Paolantino, *Frank Rizzo: The Last Big Man In Big City America* (Philadelphia: Camino Books, 1993) 96.

The Philadelphia Police Departments' historically volatile relationship with black citizens came to be fully realized under the direction of Commissioner turned Mayor, Frank Rizzo. The Rizzo directorate served as an accessory of COINTELPRO and was instrumental in the demolition of the Black Panther Party. Without the watchful eyes of the Panthers, abuse levied upon city minorities carried on unabated until John Africa and his followers provided the vital pushback. The long history of police brutality and institutional racism within Philadelphia's police department precipitated the department's altercations with MOVE that ultimately led to the bombing in 1985.

While serving as acting police commissioner in the late 1960s and subsequent tenure as mayor of Philadelphia between 1972 and 1980, Frank Rizzo not only waged war with the city's black populace but also with any group or individual that lived outside the boundaries of his own narrow ethical and moral frame-work, especially MOVE.²²¹ The Rizzo lead conflict between the police and Philadelphia's consortium of hippies, liberals, homosexuals, intellectuals, artists and radicals was both cultural and political.²²² The Rizzo lead police placed meeting places and venues frequented by the counterculture firmly in a holding pattern. Police routinely descended upon the most visible representation of Philadelphia's flourishing music scene, a concert hall named "The Electric Factory," with Rizzo vowing to "Turn this joint back into a tire factory."²²³ Philadelphia's counterculture wasn't always prone to disruptive behavior but Frank Rizzo hated them nonetheless. Increasingly, Philadelphia's civic leaders began to openly

²²¹ Rizzo, 52.

²²² Marc Stein, *City Of Brotherly and Sisterly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia 1945-1972* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004) 161.

²²³ Interview with fabled music promoter Larry Magid in Jonathan Takiff, "Decades of Dominance, Electric Factory Reigns Supreme," *Philadelphia Daily News*, (February 11, 1988) p. 34.

chastise him. ACLU director, Spencer Coxe proclaimed, “He accuses them irresponsibly of criminal intent. It gives him the chance to act in a military way, which he enjoys doing. The surest way to have a violent confrontation with them is to deny them the right to assemble.”²²⁴ Rizzo rationalized that his Stormtrooper-like approach to policing was a key to keeping Philadelphia riot free. When comparing Philadelphia to other big cities such as Newark N.J and Detroit, Rizzo proudly exclaimed “While every other city burns, and every other city is in turmoil, Not Philadelphia!”²²⁵ Civil liberties lawyer, Frank Donner argued succinctly, “While practices associated with the term ‘police state’ abound in the United States, beginning in the 1960s, police state modes of government emerged in ominous perspective in urban America. Among such subsequently disclosed police state patterns, Philadelphia’s is outstanding. Not merely in a rhetorical sense, Rizzo’s Philadelphia became a police city.”²²⁶

Vitriol directed at Commissioner Rizzo grew exponentially, and most left-leaning white and black citizens unanimously agreed that the most polarizing agent and greatest threat to race relations in the city was the Rizzo lead police force. His emergence as the dominate figure in Philadelphia’s racial politics simultaneously signaled and escalated the racial, ethnic and class tensions that were eroding the electoral coalition which had kept the Philadelphia Democratic Party in power since 1951.²²⁷

²²⁴ Quoted by former director of the Philadelphia ACLU, Spencer Coxe in *The Cop Who Would Be King*, 315.

²²⁵ Rizzo quoted in Ralph Cipriano and Tom Infield, “You Either Loved Him Or Hated Him, Rizzo’s Blunt Personality Kept Him In Controversy,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (July 17, 1991) p. A-2.

²²⁶ Frank Donner, *Protector of Privilege: Red Squads and Police Repression in Urban America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) 180.

²²⁷ Matthew Countryman, *Up South*, 179.

Historian Susan Ife Williams contends that, “Rizzo’s background represents an expose of life in America, it is only here that a high-school drop-out and avowed racist can become a police commissioner, then mayor in a city with a high proportion of blacks.”²²⁸ However, before becoming Philadelphia’s infamous and indomitable police commissioner and eventual mayor, Rizzo began his career as a beat policeman in the early 1940s and eventually ascended to the rank of captain within a decade.²²⁹ As a police captain, Rizzo took to task of eliminating any and all forms of vice from his district in the predominately black West Philadelphia. He inspired fear and loathing amongst the small time hoods, gambling rings, prostitutes and pimps that operated in his periphery. One former suspect recalled, “He was a real punch-out kind of guy and had an almost whimsical way of clobbering you.”²³⁰ Oddly enough, Rizzo never made any significant arrests of upper echelon racketeers that operated under his watch.²³¹ In spite of his heavy-handed tactics, many of the legitimate business owners within Rizzo’s watch believed, “He was the White Messiah, who could finally deliver them from the increased robberies and endless stick-up men.”²³² While Rizzo imposed his model of law and order on the streets, so many black Philadelphians began to complain to the District Attorney’s office about Rizzo’s draconian tactics that D.A., Richard Dilworth had no idea what to do.²³³ NAACP president Cecil B. Moore and his constituency considered Rizzo “totally incompetent” and “lacking the necessary education needed for a police official.”²³⁴

²²⁸ Suzaan Ife Williams, *MOVE: A Case Study*, 132.

²²⁹ Joseph R. Daughen and Peter Binzen, *The Cop Who Would Be King: Mayor Frank Rizzo* (Boston: Little Brown, 1977) 56.

²³⁰ Interview with former suspect in Greg Walter, “Rizzo” *Philadelphia Magazine*, July 1967, pp. 74.

²³¹ Joseph Daughen and Peter Binzen, 82.

²³² Greg Walter, “Rizzo” pp. 75.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Quoted in Daughen and Binzen, 100.

In contrast to the black community, Rizzo's reputation grew to an almost mythological proportion with many of the city's white ethnic working class. When interviewed, a childhood friend of Rizzo's couldn't recall Rizzo ever having any negative interaction with blacks in his formative years, but instead observed : "His racism may be the product of the short-sightedness of a policeman, it's to misplace poverty with a tendency toward breaking the law... rich people don't have to steal."²³⁵

At the very least Rizzo's fondness for comparing the challenges of his own ethnicity (Italians) with the travails of African Americans was proof enough to secure the notion that Rizzo had no idea of the black experience in America.²³⁶ In spite of the many negative assessments of his obvious limitations, Rizzo remained entirely apathetic toward his detractors and instead made a career-long habit of blathering hyperbolic statements regarding his alleged prowess as a leader. In one particular televised interview, Rizzo pronounced, "The Philadelphia Police are so tough they could invade Cuba and win."²³⁷ But bald incompetence extended throughout the rank and file police wards which functioned under Rizzo's aegis as well. According to a 2013 Philadelphia Police recruitment handbill, several education options are required of new, hopeful cadets before acceptance into the academy is considered. Afterwards a rookie police officer can then expect to complete about six-hundred and seventy- two hours of comprehensive training.²³⁸ In comparison, police training in the middle 1960s equated to no more than

²³⁵ Danial Troisi quoted in Ibid., 56.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Frank Rizzo interviewed by Tom Snyder on "The Tomorrow Show" October 9, 1979 www.youtube.com (accessed April 14, 2016)

²³⁸ "Explore a career as a city of Philadelphia Police Officer" Training Division, Police Academy Recruiter Notebook, City of Philadelphia Department of Records Volume IX (Miscellaneous Subjects) City Archives, Philadelphia, Pa.

about two-hundred hours.²³⁹ Aside from a high school diploma or GED and the passage of a general intelligence exam, no additional educational admission requirements were necessary to become a Philadelphia cop.²⁴⁰

In 1969, a New York beat cop turned Sociologist advanced an argument for compulsory higher education requirements for cadets after observing police practices in several major cities including Philadelphia. In *Behind The Shield: The Police in Urban Society*, Dr. Arthur Niederhoffer, asserted, “The hostility and fear that press almost palpably against a policeman in an urban environment aggravates his impulse to get tough. With a lack of education they are often more challenged by words than actual threats.”²⁴¹ Plainly, the increase in police brutality against blacks and other minorities could not be attributed to Frank Rizzo alone. However, since many of the largely lower-middle class, white policemen under Rizzo’s charge, idolized their superior and often mimicked his strong arm maneuvers, an inordinate amount of complaints were soon heard ranging from verbal abuse to unauthorized seizures, unexplained and unauthorized detentions, destruction of property, physical violence and homicide.²⁴² Like other black Philadelphians, MOVE members faced police brutality that shaped their perceptions of Rizzo and other law enforcement. MOVE member, Phil Africa recalled one of his earliest run-ins with police:

I once came to the defense of my older brother who was stopped coming out of a check cashing place by cops. He was jacked up by them and they said, ‘Whats’ a young nigga’ like you doing with that kind of money.’ When I stepped forward

²³⁹ Arthur Niederhoffer, *Behind the Shield: The Police in Urban Society* (New York: Anchor Books) 46.

²⁴⁰ Bruce Cory, “A Close Look at the Philadelphia Story: Has the Rizzo Regime Encouraged Brutality?” *Police Magazine*, Vol 4, Issue 2, (July 1979):36.

²⁴¹ Ibid,104.

²⁴² “The Public Interest Law Concern of Philadelphia Report” published in the *Philadelphia Tribune* April 20, 1969 pp. 1.

from the crowd of scared adults who had come to watch another black person get victimized, I attempted to explain to them how my brother had just cashed his check after working at the PGA Hospital. Instead of the cops listening to what I had to say, I was snatched up by the neck by this big white boot cop (I was 14 or 15 at the time), told to ‘face the wall nigga’ at which point he proceeded to kick me in the balls so hard I couldn’t scream or breath. I was simply told to ‘get my black ass home before I got what my brother was gone’ get. As I lay on the pavement, they put my brother in the car and drove off.²⁴³

Suspects were in many cases, beaten in custody, “utilizing techniques that leave no evidence of abuse such as pummeling the back, ribs and kidneys, beating ankles and feet, jabbing testicles, placing a telephone book on suspects head and beating with a hammer, kicking etc.”²⁴⁴

One particular harrowing incident of police homicide was noted when nineteen year old Cornell Warren was arrested on a traffic violation and shot in the back while hand cuffed.²⁴⁵ Suzaan Ife Williams noted that while the Philadelphia police did not publish comprehensive statistics as to the number of complaints they received, the newspapers published an “inordinate amount of police infractions, making it difficult to distinguish between the frivolous and legitimate claims of abuse.”²⁴⁶ However, after examining a plethora of cases, Williams concluded that while “black Philadelphians accounted for only about one-third of the general population they also accounted for over one-half of the complaints and causes of abuse.”²⁴⁷ The situation on the streets was becoming so outrageous that the Philadelphia police force was now considered “the most brutal in the

²⁴³ Testimony of Edward “Phil” Philips Africa in about MOVE onamove.com

²⁴⁴ Jonathen Neuman and William K Marimow, “The Homicide files Series,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 24-27 1977 and David Alpern with Susan Agrest, “Roundhouse Punches,” *Newsweek*, July 4, 1977 pp. 24.

²⁴⁵ Gene Roberts, “Police Brutality Complaints: Prominent Cases,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, August 19, 1974 pp.4.

²⁴⁶ Suzaan Ife Williams, 123.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

nation.”²⁴⁸ Philadelphia’s black residents, by this time, only accounted for about 27% of the city’s population.²⁴⁹ However, they “lived in a pervasive state of fear.”²⁵⁰ Director of the Penn Foundation, Richard K. Bennett, submitted a report to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights which stated that under the direction of Frank Rizzo, the Philadelphia Police department was responsible for killing three times as many blacks as whites between 1960 and 1970.²⁵¹ By the end of the decade, the U.S. Federal Justice Department filed an unusual civil suit charging Rizzo and about two dozen city and police officials with utilizing systematic police brutality.²⁵²

MOVE’s escalating radical profile garnered the attention of Rizzo and the Philadelphia police. While MOVE continued protesting in the public forum, they were routinely arrested and charged with failure to disperse, resisting arrest, disorderly conduct and obstruction of justice.²⁵³ In typical fashion, members of MOVE were often abused and beaten upon arrest. In turn, MOVE members ascended on the police districts where their cohorts were incarcerated and aggressively petitioned for their release. MOVE lieutenant Delbert Africa exclaimed “The more we were jailed the more we demonstrated.”²⁵⁴ Consequently, MOVE accrued more conflict with the police and additional arrests and abuse. Over a seven month time frame between 1974 and 1975,

²⁴⁸ Michael Kiernan, *A Close Look At The Philadelphia Story*, 29.

²⁴⁹ Pennsylvania Race and Origin of Selected Large Cities and Other Places, Earliest Census to 2010 Table 39 www.statisticalatlas.com (accessed August 4, 2016)

²⁵⁰ Quoted by the Director of Community Legal Services, Angel Ortiz to Bruce Cory in “A Closer Look At the Philadelphia Story: Has Rizzo regime Encouraged Brutality?” *Police Magazine* (July, 1979): 33.

²⁵¹ Richard K. Bennett, “ Pennsylvania Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights,” March 1971, pp. 7 law.umaryland.edu/marshall/usccr/tielist.html (accessed May 1, 2016)

²⁵² Charles Babcock, “Justice Accuses Philadelphia of Police Abuses,” *The Washington Post*, August 14, 1979. A-2. See also Philadelphia, Pa. “Police Advisory Board Records,” Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library <http://diamond.temple.edu/record=b1617237~S30>

²⁵³ Marty Dubin, “Revolution Ain’t Verbalized,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 9, 1980, p. 14A.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

MOVE affiliates were arrested over one-hundred and fifty times on misdemeanor charges, fined in excess of fifteen-thousand dollars, and sentenced collectively to several years in jail.²⁵⁵

Despite their adversarial protests methods and ever increasing run-ins with the police, MOVE was observed by many other officials in the city government as no more threatening than any other eccentric counterculture group of their time. Chief of the Philadelphia Civil affairs Unit, John Cresci asserted that, “During the period between 1973 and 1976, MOVE members were certainly vocal but not even potentially violent.”²⁵⁶ Head of the Philadelphia Crisis Intervention Network, Bennie Swans gave testament to the fact that MOVE was “somewhat strange in the sense of being back to nature and political and progressive but nevertheless were very political and very progressive and pretty much just concerned about the issues that impacted the black community.”²⁵⁷ And astonishingly, Wilson Goode, who served as Managing Director and later presided as mayor of Philadelphia during the 1985 bombing of MOVE’s Osage Avenue residence, observed, “Throughout the early seventies, the group appeared to be basically harmless.”²⁵⁸ In an interview given to a local PBS affiliate, Delbert Orr Africa attested to the early non-violent motives of MOVE, “I used to think that revolutionaries were compelled to take up arms and murder people, after coming to know the teachings of John Africa, I understood that in order to be a part of a revolution, I had to just get

²⁵⁵ Thomas Gibbons, “MOVE Group Jailed, Battle Police in Cells,” *The Evening Bulletin*, May 9, 1975 p. 4-D.

²⁵⁶ John Cresci, MOVE Commission Hearings, 10/8/85, p.32.

²⁵⁷ Bennie Swans, MOVE Commission Hearings, 10/9/85, p.38.

²⁵⁸ *In Goode Faith*, 162.

away from all the things that made me want to revolt.”²⁵⁹ Even though some higher-minded municipal officials recognized MOVE as it was, brutality projected by law enforcement toward the group continued unabashedly. John Africa’s sister Louise James recalled:

We took the beatings. We took the jailings from 1972 to 1978. MOVE people had been beat so many times... I’m talking about women who were arrested, taken to 8th and Race St. (police headquarters) along with their children... But at this period in the history of MOVE neither men nor women ever fought back. They took these beatings. I’m not just talking about someone walking up to you and pushing and shoving you. I’m talking about men who were kicked in the groin repeatedly. I’m talking about hair that was pulled out from the very roots of men and women’s heads. I’m talking about one of the MOVE brothers whose eyes were nearly pulled from the socket.²⁶⁰

In addition to facing police brutality from local enforcements, MOVE started to garner opposition from the less threatening and usually very liberal and accepting residents of Powelton Village. Many of the residents living in the community were now turned off by MOVE’s back-to-nature lifestyle, which many opined, adversely impacted the community.²⁶¹ Most residents made diplomatic advances toward MOVE while others complained directly to city officials with concerns that ran the gamut of health and zoning issues to child welfare and also complaints of rat infestation, unvaccinated dogs, excessive garbage and fecal odor.²⁶²

While the Rizzo administration was swift when applying punitive action throughout the city sphere, it was routinely sluggish when addressing grievances within the liberal

²⁵⁹ Delbert Orr Africa interviewed in a 1976 WHYY documentary, See Philadelphia MOVE Bombing Documentary www.youtube.com (accessed December 14, 2018)

²⁶⁰ Louise James, MOVE Commission Hearings, 10/10/85 p. 65-68.

²⁶¹ John T. Gillespie, “Neighbors Complain About Threats from MOVE Members,” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, April 23, 1975 p. 2-C.

²⁶² Carol Saline, “My Life In MOVE,” *Philadelphia Magazine*, September 1985, p 238.

Powelton Village section of Philadelphia, since many of the residents had opposed the mayor's bid for election in 1971.²⁶³ The authors of *The Move Crisis in Philadelphia*, Assefa and Wahrhaftig both contend that "the growing conflict between neighborhood groups and MOVE was taking place in a context in which an entire neighborhood which was New Left, racially integrated and anti- Rizzo was now being ignored by the mayor and his administration."²⁶⁴ However, the city eventually responded by closing MOVE's popular car wash for failing to secure a license. While the car wash functioned as MOVE's primary source of income, it also routinely generated heavy traffic congestion and excessive water and mud in the street.²⁶⁵ Some of the more accommodating Powelton Villagers approached MOVE with the recommendation that perhaps the commune should relocate to a rural setting more in tune with their lifestyle. Nevertheless, MOVE remained unshakable in their collective purpose of fighting challenges in the urban environment. Debra Sims Africa proclaimed, "As long as the city exists, to leave for the country would be to divert from the problem and not to correct it. The city was once the country. But it is the city now. The heart of society's problems is in the city."²⁶⁶ Still many of MOVE's neighbors, fearing declining property values were thoroughly appalled by the communes' mere presence in the neighborhood. In a *Philadelphia Inquirer* editorial, Powelton Village resident, Raymond Lewis claimed, "To show how insidious their whole philosophy is, all one has to do is take a look at their main source of income... a car washing business! In their condemnation of the present technological society we find that they are using one of its' modern developments to provide for their

²⁶³ Jim Quinn, "The Heart of Darkness," *Philadelphia Magazine* 69 no. 5(May 1978): p. 248.

²⁶⁴ *The MOVE Crisis in Philadelphia*, 34.

²⁶⁵ Kitty Caparella, "True Believer Can't Believe This," *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 10, 1978, p. 8.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

very existence. Certainly MOVE is no more than a group of maladjusted and misguided individuals.”²⁶⁷ Lewis’s observations reflected the prevailing opinion of mainstream America and its relationship to counterculture groups. The counterculture it was perceived was at best a nuisance. Historian, Arnold Toynsbee believed that the counterculture was indeed a threat to the larger social order. Ostensibly, “A red warning light for the American way of life.”²⁶⁸

Powelton residents also voiced opposition to the dozens of stray dogs which MOVE corralled at their head-quarters before the Philadelphia Zoning Board of Adjustment.²⁶⁹ An injunction was issued and MOVE was made to apply for a zoning variance in order to convert at least part of their home and headquarters to an official kennel. A failure to comply would result in the removal of the animals by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.²⁷⁰ MOVE’s presentation before the zoning board was characteristically confrontational. Ted Africa in particular hurled epithets during the hearing in which he referred to the board members as, “dictatorial idiots, paradoxical morons, schizophrenic misfits, epidemic murderers and syphilitic freaks.”²⁷¹ MOVE’s style of presentation in the courtroom and other public forums when defending minor infractions was causal for most of their arrests, fines and jail terms. By and large the

²⁶⁷ Raymond Lewis, “MOVE Called Misguided,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* April 17, 1975 p. 3-E.

²⁶⁸ Quoted in “The Hippies” *Newsweek*, July 7, 1967 available at the Swathmore College Peace Collection www.swathmore.edu See also Joe Austin and Michael Nevin Willard, *Generations of Youth: Youth Culture And History In Twentieth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 1998) xi.

²⁶⁹ John T. Gillespie, “MOVE Appeals To Zoning Board Over Stray Dogs,” *The Philadelphia Bulletin* April 25, 1975 p. 10-D.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

groups' contempt for the judicial system was inherently due to their belief that "man's law" was the lynch-pin of all evil in society.²⁷²

Although MOVE's altercations with the Philadelphia police and city government exasperated their brand of militancy, their massive fallout with their Powelton Village neighbors proved to be the basis for what Louise James described as the change in MOVE's temper and increasingly more aggressive posture. She explained, "MOVE principles have never changed, MOVE's mood... and I'm talking bitterness now... Did change!"²⁷³ Powelton Village residents began to complain to city officials about death threats from MOVE members soon after their kennel variance was rejected.²⁷⁴ Resident Ken Moeberg claimed "I was threatened when I left my home. They harangued me and said I better MOVE WITH MOVE! or, be wiped out."²⁷⁵ One member of MOVE, Conrad Africa, was convicted of assault and battery against the chairman of the Powelton Village Community Housing Cooperative, Jack Wright, who claimed he was "encircled, cursed, shoved to the ground and kicked in the face."²⁷⁶ The latest tactic of harassing the Powelton neighbors was certainly extreme and by the view point of some, illogic

²⁷² "4 Members of MOVE Arrested in Court," *The Philadelphia Tribune* March 28, 1975

²⁷³ Louise James, MOVE Commission Hearings, 10/10/85 p. 67.

²⁷⁴ "Neighbors Complain About Threats From MOVE Members"

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Marilyn Shaeffer, "MOVE Member Guilty of Assault," *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, January 18, 1975 p. A-7

Chapter 4

MOVE 9 on Trial

MOVE adopted a more militant stance and confrontational style in response to the growing opposition from the Powelton community, increasing police arrests and investigations into the commune which led to the organization's first major confrontation with local law enforcement in March 1976. Despite the organizations increasingly volatile relationship with the Powelton residents, MOVE received empathy from those who disagreed with the police department's tactics.

One particular evening, after the MOVE collective threw an impromptu party for members returning from a stint in the city jail, neighbors complaining of noise confronted the group outside of their commune on 33rd Street.²⁷⁷ Soon after, a fracas ensued and the police were called to quell the disturbance. According to the police, an attempt to disperse the crowd was met with a hail of bricks thrown by MOVE members resulting in seven officers receiving injuries and several members of MOVE being summarily arrested.²⁷⁸ MOVE's account was contradictory. While displaying a broken nightstick, Sue Africa told the press, "As soon as the cops arrived they immediately began beating people and several members of our family were injured severely."²⁷⁹ Three MOVE members, Robert, Jerry and Conrad Africa were charged with an array of offences that ranged from aggravated and simple assault, inciting a riot, possessing an instrument of

²⁷⁷ John L. Dubois and Thomas Gibbons Jr, "7 Policemen Injured in Clashes with MOVE Commune Members," *The Evening Bulletin* March 29, 1976 p. E-4.

²⁷⁸ Testimony of Police Officer Daniel Palermo in Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Marc Schogol and Robert Terry, "Commune Members Clash With Police," *The Philadelphia Inquirer* March 29, 1976 p. 2-B.

crime (bricks) and resisting arrest.²⁸⁰ These were the most grievous charges to be imposed against any MOVE member at this time. Yet probably the most damning testament of police action came with the accusation by MOVE that a baby named Life Africa was inadvertently knocked to the ground during the melee and killed.²⁸¹ No persons except for members of MOVE recalled a baby being at the scene of the clash. However, the police investigated the report but remained skeptical of the allegation on the grounds of MOVE's refusal to present the body of the child for an autopsy as well their inability to surrender the child's birth certificate.²⁸² Approximately a week after the Powelton Village clash and alleged death of Life Africa, MOVE made an unexpected overture to a group of outsiders. *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter Ellen Karasik, City Councilmen Joseph Coleman and Lucian Blackwell, Blackwell's wife Jane and Reverend Wrennie Morgan of the Philadelphia Human Relations Commission were all invited to the MOVE commune as dinner guests.²⁸³ Contrary to their rebellious appearance and unorthodox property management methodology, MOVE deliberately took great pains on this particular occasion to accommodate their visitors. Lucian Blackwell recalled, "I found that the way they looked from the street was entirely different from the way that they lived. The day that we arrived, we went inside and everything was clean."²⁸⁴ Although the dinner was quiet and somewhat tense, the meal consisted of several meticulously prepared cooked selections. The MOVE children, however, sat at a

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Laura Murray, "MOVE: Deputies Caused Baby Death," *The Philadelphia Tribune* November 11, 1976 p. 3-D.

²⁸² "Commune Members Clash With Police"

²⁸³ Ellen Karasik, "MOVE Members Show Body of Baby at Secret Meeting," *The Philadelphia Inquirer* April 6, 1976 p. A-2

²⁸⁴ Interview with Lucian Blackwell in "Bombing on Osage Avenue," Produced by PBS, WHYY T.V., 1987 (accessed Feb. 19, 2016 www.youtube.com)

separate table and dined on raw chicken legs.²⁸⁵ Soon before the dinner concluded, a note was passed to the guests that read, “The baby is here. You’ll see it after dinner.”²⁸⁶ Thereafter, the party was led through a dark hallway into a candle-lit room where a dead infant lay in a small box on a bed of straw while the stench of decomposing flesh enveloped the room.²⁸⁷ Lucian Blackwell offered to conduct a former investigation once an autopsy was conducted on the deceased child. MOVE member, Delbert Africa responded, “It is against our principles.” The baby was apparently returned to “cycle back” to the earth in the same fashion as all living things.²⁸⁸ It was never entirely clear if the display of the dead child to the press and select city council members was a clever publicity stunt or an elaborate hoax. Nevertheless, charges were never filed for the purported murder of Life Africa since the cadaver was never delivered to the coroner.²⁸⁹ Despite being prime targets for arrest and harassment, MOVE managed to embarrass the Philadelphia police force.

Over the next year and a half, tensions increased between MOVE and the police as well as their Powelton neighbors. All of the MOVE members that had been arrested during the March 1976 scuffle were given long sentences in state prison. More than a few of the original, several dozen thick MOVE supporters, dissipated after being “harassed, made weak, and taken over”²⁹⁰

²⁸⁵ “MOVE Members Show Body of Baby at Secret Meeting”

²⁸⁶ John Gillespie, “MOVE Shows Dead Tot,” *The Sunday Bulletin*, April 11, 1976 p. 1-B.

²⁸⁷ “Move Members Show Body of Baby At Secret Meeting”

²⁸⁸ Charles Layton, “DA Refuses Action on MOVE Claim,” *The Philadelphia Tribune* April 13, 1976 p. A-4.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Charles Sims Africa quoted in Robert Terry, “Now Is The Time for MOVE to Move On,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* *Robert, Conrad, and Jerry Africa were arrested during the 1976 street confrontation and charged with aggravated assault of the police. These were the most serious charges levied against MOVE at this time. See Robert Terry, “West Philly Commune Members Clash with the Police: 3 held”

The most committed band of young devotees, who eventually became known as the “MOVE 9” remained in residence at the Powelton headquarters and were, at times sustained by a handful of visiting adjuncts. John Africa’s nephew and niece Charles and Debbie Sims continued to cohabitate with Delbert Orr, Eddie Goodman, Michael and Janine Davis, Frank “Phil” Phillips, Janet Holloway and Merle Austin.²⁹¹ Although the median age of the so called MOVE 9 was about twenty-three years,²⁹² their unwavering truculence had long been forged by the hard knocks of the city streets and countless encounters with racist policing. Debbie Sims was brought into MOVE by her mother after a gang fight cost Sims a day in court, a two-year probation, and one of her opponents “A two-pronged fork wound and a broken nose.”²⁹³ Much like Delbert Orr, Eddie Goodman was a former member of the Black Panthers and had supported the Black Liberation Army and another local black militant group called the “Black Muslims.”²⁹⁴ Charles Sims recalled that as a boy, he idol worshiped the Black Panthers and actually “tried to march with them in the streets” at one early Philadelphia BPP rally.²⁹⁵ Michael Davis asserted that he was “completely awestruck” by the Panthers and other models of the Black Power Movement.²⁹⁶

The abbreviated commune’s new primary focus was to demand the release of the abbreviated commune’s new primary focus was to demand the release of the abbreviated commune’s new primary focus was to demand the release of the convicted “political

²⁹¹ Onamove.com (accessed December 15, 2017)

²⁹² Linn Washington, “Suit Filed Against MOVE,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 2, 1977, p.27.

²⁹³ Debbie Sims Africa quoted in letter to author August 17, 2017

²⁹⁴ Onamove.com (accessed December 15, 2017)

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Quote from Michael Davis Africa to author May, 2017

prisoners” and confront what they believed was the purposeful dismantling of their organization.²⁹⁷ After a series of articles published in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* highlighting the on-going federal investigation of the Philadelphia police and allegations of police brutality, John Africa began advising his MOVE disciples that a police raid on MOVE was near, and the possibility of police reprisals were far greater because of the accounts in the newspaper.²⁹⁸ The revelations of police brutality featured in the *Inquirer* may very well have fanned the flames of aggression toward MOVE.

The credible reports of child neglect flourished throughout Powelton Village and were fast becoming another point of contention that escalated tensions between MOVE, their neighbors and the police. While it was well known that the MOVE group refused to inculcate their offspring into the curriculum offered by public education, many of their under-clothed or totally naked children played outdoors year-round.²⁹⁹ Several of the children appeared malnourished and their distended stomachs displayed the uncanny trait of Kwashiorkor.³⁰⁰ When asked about the welfare of the children, one unidentified male MOVE member exclaimed “The kids bellies are swelled because they eat all the time.”³⁰¹ However, the carbohydrate rich, protein deprived diet of “sweet potato, onions, mango,

²⁹⁷ Robert Terry, “West Philadelphia Commune Members Clash with Police: 6 Held,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 29, 1976 p. B-1

²⁹⁸ Kitty Caparella, “Bomb Plot Mushrooms into Siege,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 7, 1978 p. 4.

²⁹⁹ Testimony of MOVE neighbor, Inez Williams MOVE commission hearings October 17, 1985, pg. 151 Temple University Archives

³⁰⁰ Cicely Williams, “A Nutritional Disease Of Childhood, Associated With A Maize Diet,” *Archives Of Disease In Childhood* 58, (1933, 1983): 550-560. Jamaican physician, Williams was notable for her research and naming the disease known as kwashiorkor and for advancing the field of maternal and child health in developing nations. Kelly Hensley, “Cicely Delphin Williams,” in Benjamin and Barbara Shearer ed., *Notable Women in the Life Sciences: A Biographical Dictionary* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996) 396-400.

³⁰¹ Excerpt from 1976 WHYY T.V. 12 documentary in *Let The Fire Burn*, directed by Jason Osder, Zeitgeist Films, 2013

water melon and sometimes... raw chicken”³⁰² afforded to the children was probably what contributed to the condition, often only seen in developing nations.³⁰³ However, it was the damning photo of two city councilmen staring at a dead and decomposing baby in the MOVE house that exasperated the radical groups’ tenuous reputation with city officials.

MOVE decided to build an almost ten foot high wall around the home in order to deter inspectors.³⁰⁴ The Department of Licenses and Inspection along with a consortium of social workers, health officials and law enforcement agents planned an inspection of the commune with the objective of examining the health and well-being of the children who resided inside the house. MOVE also made an official declaration stating, “Any inspection violates the sanctity of our home, and we will consider any incursion as a declaration of war.”³⁰⁵ Certainly, the alleged death of the infant, Life Africa was causal for MOVE’s defiance. Their actions at this time were reflective of the Black Panther Ten-Point program, especially, Article Six of “What We Believe” which states, “We Will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and military, by whatever means necessary.”³⁰⁶

After MOVE successfully botched the inspection, several members routinely positioned themselves around the periphery of their property while brandishing rifles and shotguns. Like the Black Panthers, their collective attire now consisted of khaki

³⁰² Testimony of Michael Moses Ward “Birdie Africa,” MOVE Commission Hearings, October 31, 1985 in *Ibid.*

³⁰³ Ife-Williams, 552.

³⁰⁴ “Revolution Ain’t Verbalized,” p. 14A

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ “The Black Panther Platform: What We Want, What We Believe,” in Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines eds., *Takin’ It To The Streets*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 132.

jumpsuits and black berets.³⁰⁷ Commenting on the organization's overt defiance, Mumia Abu-Jamal observed, "The city went wild. Front page photos, live footage, not since the Panthers strolled the streets of Sacramento had a black organization captured the imagination of the people with simple, unapologetic militancy."³⁰⁸ In the opinion of many other Philadelphians, MOVE's aims had evolved beyond those of the typical eccentric counterculture group. According to activist and crisis arbiter Bennie Swans, "It became clear that MOVE could in fact become a violent organization, would in fact fight and would in fact use weapons in order to accomplish their mission."³⁰⁹ MOVE member, Ramona Africa attempted to discredit this widely held belief during the MOVE Commission Hearings in 1985 by stating, These deterrents (guns) were inoperable, and the only reason why we displayed them was because that's what the police believe in. Guns! Okay?³¹⁰ Chuck Africa's assertions were similar, "We knew the psychological effects that guns had on cops, we wanted to show that we wouldn't be beaten and intimidated without a like response."³¹¹ At least at this phase, MOVE's guns were indeed inoperable.³¹² After the militaristic display, MOVE made an official, albeit hyperbolic statement to the police and city government that solidified their potential to engage in armed conflict:

Don't attempt to enter MOVE headquarters or harm MOVE people unless you want an international incident. We are prepared to hit reservoirs, empty hotels and apartment houses, close factories and tie up traffic in major cities of Europe... We are not a bunch of frustrated, middle class college students, irrational radicals

³⁰⁷ Testimony of Gregor Sambor, MOVE Commission hearings, 10/17/85 p. 199.

³⁰⁸ Mumia Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 161.

³⁰⁹ Testimony of Bennie Swans, MOVE Commission Hearings, 10/ 9 85 p. 45.

³¹⁰ Ramona Africa's statement during the MOVE Commission Hearings in Anderson and Hevenor, *Burning Down The House*, p.284.

³¹¹ Testament of Chuck Africa in "MOVE Confrontation In Philadelphia" www.youtube.com (accessed May 16, 2016)

³¹² The findings and conclusions of the MOVE Special Commission Hearings in *Let It Burn*

or confused terrorists. We are a deeply religious organization totally committed to the principle of our belief as taught by our founder John Africa. We are not looking for trouble. We are just looking to be left alone.³¹³

While these statements echoed the radical rhetoric of groups such as the Weathermen or Black Liberation Army which viewed revolutionary violence as an integral part of their philosophy, MOVE ultimately wanted to maintain their lifestyle without intervention from the outside or police. But they were now willing to use violence to achieve this end. The hand written statement was ostensibly signed with the chemical equations for nitroglycerine and TNT, and in effect alerted the U.S. Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.³¹⁴ MOVE originally only endeavored to challenge societal norms through their iconoclastic lifestyle. But at this time, the group, much like more radical contemporaries cultivated a new posture by threatening international calamity and brandishing fire-arms.³¹⁵ However, threats of violence only disallowed them to avoid interference from city government.

Neighborhood Advocates

Despite the Powelton Village residents' opposition and frustration with MOVE, two distinct camps in the community sought ways to diffuse the conflict by either avoiding police intervention or the use of violence by local law enforcement. The dispute over what to do about MOVE was now shifting to neighborhood community groups.³¹⁶ The

³¹³ Segment of MOVE group statement to the Philadelphia police, May 1977 in "MOVE Confrontation in Philly, The Whole Story," www.youtube.com accessed March 20, 2016.

³¹⁴ Interview with ATF agent Walter Wasyluk in "Who Was John Africa?"

³¹⁵ Jim Geraghty, "It's Not The 1960s: Group Violence in America Is Hard To Pull Off," *The National Review*, June 22, 2017

³¹⁶ Linn Washington, "Civil Rights Suit Is Filed Against MOVE," *The Philadelphia Daily Tribune*, July 2, 1977, p. 27.

new hurriedly formed “Powelton Emergency Human Rights Committee,” (PEHRC) petitioned the city and law enforcement to “use nonviolent action to end MOVE’s threats and criminal activities.”³¹⁷ Conversely, another hastily formed group that called itself “Powelton United Neighbors” (PUN) vehemently argued that city government and police should not intervene. “Police intervention can only polarize our residents, heighten racial tensions and possibly destroy the best features of Powelton as a community. United action by black and white residents has been the heart of success of our community. The police cannot help us.”³¹⁸ In spite of the fact that these two opposing community groups preferred a swift end to the MOVE ordeal, both understood that a Rizzo lead police action was dicey given Rizzo’s history of racially motivated policing.³¹⁹ As Powelton Village residents continued their debate, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania accepted the city’s petition to grant a full blockade of the MOVE house and force the commune out.³²⁰ It wasn’t long before over one-hundred police officers were dispatched and began to cordon off several blocks around the MOVE compound. Utilities were shut down and no food, water or provisions were allowed to enter the home.³²¹ Headlines splashed with Rizzo’s proclamation to MOVE, “Get out or Die!”³²² ran concurrently with the mayor’s pronouncement for whites to fight blacks for better jobs, better housing and a better life.³²³

³¹⁷ PEHRC, telegram to *The Philadelphia Tribune*, June 29, 1977 in Ibid.

³¹⁸ PUN request signed by over one-hundred and fifty Powelton residents and delivered to the offices of Frank Rizzo, July 2, 1977 in Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ “Halting the Cult: A Ten Year Battle,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 13, 1985, p.7.

³²¹ Jim Quinn, “Heart of Darkness” p. 249.

³²² “Get Out Or Die!, Says Mayor” *The Philadelphia Journal*, March 26, 1978, p. A-1.

³²³ Jill Porter, “Rizzo’s Aim is Equality For Whites,” *The Philadelphia Daily News*, March 22, 1978 p. 8.

For almost five months, in front of an ever growing crowd of media and curious on-lookers, MOVE stood their ground and delivered diatribes through a P.A system directly at the Rizzo administration, all the while, condemning the continuing police brutality and the incarceration of their comrades who were sentenced during the street confrontation with the police almost two years earlier.³²⁴

As the year wore on, many more Powelton residents began to begrudge MOVE's antics. Still, most preferred that the police remain detached from any formal negotiations with the radical group. Notably, six of the seven neighborhood organizations that emerged at this time preferred that MOVE remained a part of the community.³²⁵ These groups were comprised of both non-black members and Black Power proponents. However, they all shared at least one thing in common, they vehemently disagreed with the police departments actions against MOVE. The Powelton United Neighbors (PUN) organization in particular was very dismayed by the way city officials were handling MOVE's so-called removal. PUN considered the blockade and starvation tactics "just another racist assault given the background of Rizzo."³²⁶

MOVE's adoption of the Black Panther dress code and practice of wielding firearms was a symbolic affront to racist authority and is undoubtedly what they had most in common with the BPP who often patrolled black neighborhoods in order to "Police the Police." Like the BPP, MOVE was within their right to carry arms for the purpose of protecting their property and personhood. According to the then current, state by state

³²⁴ Kitty Caparella, "Bomb Plot Mushrooms into Siege," p. 30.

³²⁵ Powelton Community in Support of MOVE, "An Open Letter to Mayor Rizzo, Our Philadelphia Neighbors and Philadelphia City Council." July 3, 1977. Box 993, Folder 1894, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, Pa.

³²⁶ PUN, Petition

law, individuals had the right to resist arrest if they fear the use of deadly force in their apprehension.³²⁷ Suzanne Ife Williams argues, “The case against MOVE was never firmly established, other than not letting the city examine their premises for health violations. Since MOVE acted as a defense agency intent on forestalling the invasion of their own property, their brand of armed militancy is also akin to the actions of an early firebrand collective in the freedom struggle known as the “Deacons for Defense and Justice.”³²⁸ It is firmly established that black activists have long been forced to arm themselves while repelling white attackers and protecting the sanctity of their homes. However, the Deacons for Defense and Justice were founded in 1964 as one of the first notable highly organized self-defense groups. The Deacons equipped themselves with firearms and successfully thwarted the continuous intimidation of the Ku Klux Klan in their own home town of Jonesboro, Louisiana.³²⁹ For many black Philadelphians, their own police department was no more than a manifestation of the Ku Klux Klan and Frank Rizzo, its Grand Wizard.

Various MOVE members did in fact make a fatal mistake when they ventured from their property and marched in military fashion with guns pointed in the air.³³⁰ Chuck Africa was arrested and released, but the shotgun he brandished was confiscated. The serial number on the weapon was traced to a purchase made with a stolen driver’s license.

³²⁷ Dag E. Ytreberg, “Arrest –Right to Resist Excessive Force,” *American Law Reports* 77 (San Francisco: Bancroft-Whitney, 1977) 290-91. In Suzanne Ife Williams, *Police Brutality: A Case Study of MOVE/Philadelphia* 201.

³²⁸ Simon Wendt, “The Roots of Black Power? Armed resistance and the Radicalization of the Civil Rights Movement,” in Peniel E. Joseph ed., *The Black Power Movement* 146.

³²⁹ See Hamilton Bims, “Deacons for Defense,” *Ebony*, September 1965, 25-30 and *The New York Times*, February 21, 1965, 52. In *Ibid*, 327.

³³⁰ “Who Are the MOVE 9?” MOVE Organization Documentary www.youtube.com (accessed May 26, 2016)

However, the handwriting and fingerprints belonged to none -other than Donald Glassey, the young professor who transcribed John Africa's "Guidelines".³³¹ Glassey was swiftly arrested and charged with falsifying firearm information, a federal offense.³³² As a tactic to build a case against MOVE, federal agents offered Glassey a reduced sentence only if he agreed to become an informant. In lieu of a five- year prison sentence, Glassey took the deal.³³³ The mild -mannered sociology professor wasted no time when cooperating with the authorities and led the ATF and the police directly to a cache of firearms, bomb-making devices, and how-to manuals such as *The Anarchists Cookbook*.³³⁴ After learning of Glassey's arrest John Africa hastily fled Philadelphia leaving his lieutenant Delbert Africa at the helm of MOVE's affairs. John Africa, whereabouts unknown, was sentenced in absentia along with six other MOVE members for violating federal weapons law.³³⁵

As the barricade in front of MOVE headquarters remained in place, a plethora of third-party intermediaries ranging from religious leaders, lawyers and activists offered assistance to MOVE, their neighbors and the police with the intention of averting a violent armed conflict.³³⁶ Offers were made which would allow MOVE to relocate either to a farm or to a group of houses in North East Philadelphia. Negotiations fell through when homeowners at the proposed new neighborhood sharply criticized the transplanting of the radical group.³³⁷ For MOVE, the real issue was never the house, in and of itself,

³³¹ "Who Was John Africa?"

³³² "Heart of Darkness" 245.

³³³ Mc Coy, "Who Was John Africa?" 10.

³³⁴ Kitty Caperella, *Bomb Plot Mushrooms into Siege* 30.

³³⁵ Carol Saline, "Halting the Cult: A 10 Year Battle," *Philadelphia Daily News* May 13, 1985 p.7.

³³⁶ *The MOVE Crisis In Philadelphia*, 45.

³³⁷ "No Welcome Wagon for MOVE in N.E. Philly," *The Philadelphia Bulletin* February 10, 1978. p. B-3.

but the continuation of their organization and purpose. Janet Holloway Africa, who had “once lived within the comfortable confines of a life in the suburbs,”³³⁸ shouted out at the barricade, “Rizzo didn’t pay any attention to this house until he found out about the strategy of John Africa and until he started realizing what we are living for. Rizzo wants to get rid of MOVE!”³³⁹

One of the third party intermediaries who hoped to diffuse the escalating conflict was a young, astute and sympathetic attorney by the name of Joel Todd who had previous experience engaging MOVE when he was appointed public defender for the three members arrested in the 1976 street scuffle.³⁴⁰ Todd was of the opinion that the ordeal which was playing out in this eclectic Philadelphia neighborhood was clearly between the city and the MOVE organization, stating, “The neighborhood had nothing to do with it.”³⁴¹ After Todd volleyed positions between the MOVE and the police, he authored a proposition that members with outstanding charges relating to the gun display incident should turn over all firearms. Secondly, MOVE would then agree to a lawful inspection by health code inspectors and child welfare agents. Finally, all people and animals were required to vacate the commune on 33rd Street and find residence no less than two miles from Powelton Village.³⁴² MOVE was cautiously optimistic while Todd represented them. However, the terms that were initially drafted remained unacceptable. Delbert Africa announced that “John Africa’s people weren’t going to place themselves in

³³⁸ As told by MOVE member Janet Holloway to author

³³⁹ Janet Africa interview by WDAS F.M. reporter E. Stevens- Collins in Who are the MOVE 9? MOVE Organization Documentary www.youtube.com (accessed May 26, 2016)

³⁴⁰ James H. Laue, “Third Party Roles in Community Conflict: The MOVE Experience,” *Conflict Resolution Notes* 4, no. 2 (September 1986): 11.

³⁴¹ David Gunter, “MOVE Kills Surrender Deal, *The Evening Bulletin*, February 27, 1978, pg. E-6.

³⁴² Ibid.

jeopardy of some maniac-ass cop who has our name on his bullet!”³⁴³ MOVE demanded that Todd amend the proposition to the city with the inclusion that MOVE surrender under the vigilant supervision of their attorney and third party observers acceptable to both MOVE and the city.

MOVE’s surrender and relocation would transpire only after incarcerated MOVE members were released without bond and all charges pending against MOVE stemming from the weapons charges were dropped.³⁴⁴ Since many of the charges were misdemeanors such as disorderly conduct, failure to disperse, and inciting a riot, Todd believed that the courts were willing to agree to wave bail and release surrendering MOVE members but without making a public statement that could set a precedent.³⁴⁵ While incremental steps were being made to resolve the conflict, word reached the MOVE headquarters that police had abused two of their incarcerated members. Todd personally investigated the matter and observed that “The men who were injured; one had dried blood on him the other had severe pain when walking.”³⁴⁶ In response, Delbert Africa brandished a bullhorn, stood on the precipice in front of the blockade, and announced, “We are through negotiating. We don’t trust them. They are untrustworthy.”³⁴⁷ Not unlike other black activist organizations established in Philadelphia, MOVE had long since rejected the notion that racist policing was an anomaly. Instead, “police were considered the primary enforcers of racial control in a

³⁴³ Kitty Caparella, “MOVE Refuses to Go to Court,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 2, 1978, pg. 3.

³⁴⁴ David Gunter, “MOVE Kills Surrender Deal”

³⁴⁵ James F. Clarity, “Judge Balks Philadelphia’s Effort to Isolate Revolutionary Group,” *The New York Times*, March 3, 1978, A-8.

³⁴⁶ David Gunter, “MOVE Kills Surrender Deal”

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

white supremacist society.”³⁴⁸ Moreover, this conviction served as a clarion call to advance John Africa’s directive that called to exterminate “the system.”

Despite the Powelton residents’ opposition to the use of violence against MOVE, the growing unanimity amongst its denizens was that the organization had no rights since they disturbed the peace and accumulated debris on the property.³⁴⁹ In spite of the myriad complaints initially made by the Powelton Community, most residents were now on edge and fearful of a violent confrontation between the radical group and the police. One young woman responded to news reporters at the blockade, “People are people regardless of their color or religion. It’s all going to boil down to people getting hurt or killed for no good reason.”³⁵⁰ After making the noble effort of arbitrating the stalemate between MOVE and the city, an exasperated Joel Todd decided to relinquish his role to the newly established Citywide Black Community Coalition for Human Rights.³⁵¹ Some notable local black organizations showed support for MOVE during its increasingly hostile encounters with the police department. Comprised of notable black business leaders, religious figures such as Father Paul M. Washington and attorneys Oscar Gaskins and Walter Palmer,³⁵² the Coalition maintained the position that the methods of the Philadelphia police force and city officials who were handling the MOVE standoff resembled “the continuing history of the flagrant disregard for the human rights of blacks

³⁴⁸ Citizens for the Police Advisory Board, document October 9, 1969, special collections, box 22 folder 20, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, Pa.

³⁴⁹ Citizens for the Police Advisory Board, document October 9, 1969, special collections, box 22 folder 20, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, Pa.

³⁵⁰ Unidentified teenage resident of Powelton Village to WCAU-TV. in “Philadelphia MOVE Bombing Documentary”

³⁵¹ Karen Ditko, “Citywide Coalition Organized to Settle MOVE Encounter,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 14, 1978, pg. 5

³⁵² *Other Sheep I Have*, 179.

at home and abroad.”³⁵³ The Coalition began by first organizing a demonstration of several thousand participants who fashioned a human barricade around Philadelphia City Hall, symbolizing the constructed barricade which surrounded the MOVE compound.³⁵⁴ Afterwards, the Coalition in concert with an assortment of Third World dignitaries, petitioned the United Nations to publicize the MOVE ordeal as a human rights violation.³⁵⁵ In addition, a local Pan-Africanist group calling itself the “African Peoples Cadre Organization” (APCO) struck out first with an attempt to undermine the starvation tactics of the “self-proclaimed racist mayor of Philadelphia by bringing food and water to our thirsty and starving brothers and sisters.”³⁵⁶ The APCO’s overtures toward the sequestered group were important as they served as an example of MOVE’s connection to the larger black freedom struggle. The APCO also declared that, “The starvation death of innocent black men, women, and children is a part of the sinister aims of Frank Rizzo’s national white supremacy campaign.”³⁵⁷ There is verification that some of the young adherents to John Africa’s *Guidelines* hadn’t made a conscious connection with black nationalism, as evidenced by Debbie Sim’s statement, “No Third World revolutionary movements had any impact on MOVE at all.”³⁵⁸ Nevertheless, actions spearheaded by the Coalition served as an embarrassment to city government and gained a modicum of leverage for MOVE, whose cause was now amalgamating with the larger Black Nationalist Movement.

³⁵³ Ditko, *Philadelphia Tribune*

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Statement by the African People’s Cadre attached to Poweltonians for Democratic Action, press release, June 23, 1977. Box 993, Folder 1889, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, Pa.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Quoted by Debbie Sims Africa in letter to author

Soon after the demonstration, the sequestered radical group granted approval for the Coalition recommended attorney Oscar Gaskins to represent them and to author a new proposal that was acceptable to city government yet served the better interests of MOVE.³⁵⁹ Prior to the erection of the blockade MOVE's chief demand was the release of its' jailed members who they deemed political prisoners. Conversely, the city considered such an action a threat to the integrity of the legal system.³⁶⁰ Upon observing that the MOVE members who had been arrested in the 1976 street brawl had served out most of their sentences, Gaskin craftily formulated a solution that allowed for the release of the incarcerated MOVE members with their sentences being commuted to time served.³⁶¹ In exchange, MOVE members with outstanding warrants stemming from the gun brandishing episode, were to surrender at the barricade and be taken to police headquarters. There they would be arraigned and quickly released back to the MOVE building under the supervision of Gaskin and his legal team.³⁶² During the arraignment process, MOVE was required to surrender any weapons and submit to an inspection by police escorted health and welfare officials. Upon completing the initial steps of the agreement, the City would dismantle the barricade and allow utilities to be turned on at the MOVE compound. Lastly, MOVE was required to leave their house in Powelton Village within ninety days.³⁶³ Surprisingly, MOVE began to comply. They busied themselves cleaning the grounds surrounding the compound as well as the interior of the house. Health inspectors and police were allowed inside and a thorough search revealed

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ *The MOVE Crisis in Philadelphia*, 72.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Jim Quinn, "MOVE Sect in Philadelphia Agrees to Surrender, Leaving Run Down House," *The Washington Post*, May 5, 1978 B-3.

³⁶³ Ibid.

only a few inoperative rifles.³⁶⁴ However, it was made obvious to the police and city officials that MOVE believed that their struggle was not lost. Throughout the surrender and arraignment process many MOVE members chanted, “Long live revolution, long live MOVE, long live John Africa!”³⁶⁵ Characteristically, Frank Rizzo responded, “If it wasn’t for the children, we could have taken a one-hundred foot crane and a wrecking ball to that house and it would have been the end of them. Then we would have wrapped their guns around their necks.”³⁶⁶

The de-escalation of the stand-off between the Philadelphia city government and the radical group MOVE came as a relief to those who resided in the surrounding neighborhood of Powelton Village. Unfortunately, the respite proved to be short-lived as tensions again began to mount regarding the ninety-day eviction deadline which was fast approaching. City officials maintained that all MOVE members should leave the compound by the deadline or else be subject to further arrests as the house was slated to be torn down.³⁶⁷ In the words of City Solicitor, Sheldon Albert, “The razing of the house was necessary to obliterate any rancor that still could be in the neighborhood and prevent the compound from being a cult-type symbol.”³⁶⁸ Conversely, MOVE understood the agreement to physically vacate the house but nevertheless believed that they could retain ownership of the dwelling.³⁶⁹ Additionally, and perhaps as a response to MOVE’s continuing militancy and gleeful demeanor during the surrender and arraignment

³⁶⁴ Andrew Wallace, “A Dispute Imperils MOVE Truce,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 24, 1978, C-2.

³⁶⁵ Murray Dubin and Robert Terry, “MOVE and City Reach Pact: Group to Give Up Today,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 4, 1978, p. 1-A.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ “A Dispute Imperils MOVE Truce”

³⁶⁸ Philip Weiss, “How He Bombed in Philadelphia: Goode, Bad, and Ugly,” *The New Republic*, June 10, 1985, p. 12.

³⁶⁹ “A Dispute Imperils MOVE Truce”

proceeding, the police ordered the group to relinquish all of their animals and the P.A. system that they utilized for their street demonstrations immediately.³⁷⁰ MOVE steadfastly refused the verbal order. Shortly after, Phil Africa quickly forwarded a written motion to the courts through MOVE attorney Oscar Gaskins stating, “We want to emphasize to you as strongly as possible that our interpretation of the agreement which was communicated to us by our lawyer was different from yours.”³⁷¹

The logistics of finding suitable living arrangements for the MOVE organization within the ninety- day time frame also proved to be a daunting task. The City gave a solution to the group, offering them five run down rental properties in an all- black section of North Philadelphia for a grand total of one dollar per year.³⁷² A *Philadelphia Daily News* article underscored the irony of moving a group of people out of a dwelling that the city deemed unfit for human occupation into a grouping of homes that were far worse.³⁷³ MOVE gave no consideration to the City’s offer. The group began contemplating what had been recommended to them time and again, a retreat in a rural setting. Debbie Sims Africa recollected, “We considered going to a farm because it was healthier and could be land MOVE picked out.”³⁷⁴ The Coalition that advocated for MOVE found a possible rural site in southern New Jersey. Initially there was much enthusiasm for the prospect and thereafter a few MOVE members were shuttled out to the location to meet the owner, a black farmer, who gave the impression that he wanted to use them for “slave labor.”³⁷⁵ MOVE flat out rejected this particular offer. As the dead-

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ J. Patrick O’Conner, *The Framing of Mumia Abu-Jamal* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2008) 40.

³⁷⁴ Interview with Debbie Sims Africa in *Discourse and Destruction*

³⁷⁵ *The MOVE Crisis In Philadelphia*, 76.

line for eviction fast approached, various other private and public groups such as the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations offered parcels of land in not only rural but quasi-isolated areas that MOVE collectively found unsuitable. Phil Africa complained openly to the press, “How can I take my family to a place surrounded on three sides by a swamp, a place that I can’t get out of?”³⁷⁶ Some members of the MOVE family remained wary of accepting a government endowed parcel of land believing that “It was a trick to get MOVE isolated so they could kill us without witnesses.”³⁷⁷ According to Ramona Africa, the MOVE organization coordinated members to scout for property in New York State and in locations near Richmond Virginia, while others remained behind at the Powelton compound.³⁷⁸ A deal was struck in Charlotte County Virginia on a foreclosed farm situated on almost ninety-six acres for a total of twelve-thousand dollars.³⁷⁹ Before MOVE began the settlement process on the new acquisition in Virginia, a collective of mounted police arrived with a court order regarding reports of neglected children who had no clothes and demanded to search the premises.³⁸⁰ MOVE unanimously believed that the Philadelphia police had tipped off authorities in Richmond. Merle Africa recalled, “They deliberately sabotaged us. Neighbors around the farm began to complain to the realtor who then demanded the full price for the farm in one payment, knowing we couldn’t pay it. So we lost the farm.”³⁸¹ Delbert Africa then petitioned Philadelphia City council stating that MOVE was making a concerted effort to relocate and asked for a time extension beyond the agreed upon ninety day deadline to allow

³⁷⁶ Kitty Caparella, “MOVE Has Virginia Branch,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 7, 1978, p. 4.

³⁷⁷ “My Life in MOVE”

³⁷⁸ Interview with Ramona Africa in “ Ramona Africa Speaks about the MOVE 9, Mumia-Abu Jamal, Dr. Mutulu Shakur and Political Prisoners,” youtube.com (accessed August 8, 2016)

³⁷⁹ “MOVE has Virginia Branch”

³⁸⁰ “My Life In Move”

³⁸¹ Interview with Merle Africa in *The MOVE Crisis in Philadelphia*, 78.

MOVE to resettle. The request was denied.³⁸² On the eve of the ninetieth day before the dead line, the news media converged once more outside of MOVE headquarters. In a fit of frustration, Delbert proclaimed before the press assemblage, “There ain’t no deadline as far as the teachings of John Africa are concerned!.. This is our house! We aint gonna’ take no eviction notice from a sadistic goon like Rizzo!”³⁸³ In spite of an almost entire year of tense negotiations with the city of Philadelphia a process which involved third party intermediaries, community action groups and concerned neighbors, MOVE’s prospects now appeared bleak. All the while, the police presence in front of the barricaded MOVE house had cost the taxpayers over a million dollars in overtime pay.³⁸⁴ Many of the rank and file cops held the view that the city had been too soft on the radical group.³⁸⁵ A local CBS affiliate interviewed the mayor and former cop, Frank Rizzo who blustered, “Tomorrow, police will evict MOVE from that house by force. If they resist, they will be dragged by the scruff of their necks... Children or not!”³⁸⁶ In many ways, Rizzo’s approach mirrored the leadership of other police chiefs in the South such as the infamous Eugene “Bull” Conner. Conner, much like his northern counterpart, applied a brutal approach to both black adults and children when dealing with perceived threats to the established order in Birmingham, Alabama.³⁸⁷ However, while Rizzo’s ferocity was dispensed against Philadelphia’s black populace and copious white

³⁸² “The MOVE Confrontation in Philadelphia”

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ “Halting the Cult”

³⁸⁵ Murray Dubin and Robert Terry, MOVE and CITY Reach Pact: Group to Give Up Today,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 4, 1978, p. 1-A

³⁸⁶ “RBG Who were the MOVE 9 Documentary”

³⁸⁷ See William Nunnally, *Bull Conner*, (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1991) 90-105.

counterculture. MOVE bore the burden of being both black and a component of the radicalized counterculture.

After arrest warrants were issued for the twelve adult members of MOVE for violating their agreement with the city, nearly six-hundred police took position outside the house at 306 N. 33rd St. where the group was still holed up on August 8, 1978.³⁸⁸ The police armed to the teeth with tear gas and thousands of rounds of ammunition were dressed in riot gear and bullet-proof vests. At approximately 3 a.m., several officers took position and directed a bulldozer to tear the remaining barricade and fence down in front of the MOVE compound. Soon after, a cherry-picker equipped with a battering ram punched a gaping hole in the front of the once stately Victorian –era dwelling.³⁸⁹ Monsignor William Devlin, a Catholic priest who had been among the many of MOVE’s advocates during the blockade, was enlisted to petition the group to surrender. Delbert Africa responded, “You SWAT guys in those bulletproof suits don’t scare us.” Another unidentified MOVE member shouted, “A lot of your wives will be wearing black tonight.”³⁹⁰ Shortly after MOVE’s retort, tear gas was fired into the hole made by the battering ram. Simultaneously, firemen under the cover of sharpshooters proceeded to flood the basement of the cavernous house with water propelled by fire hoses. Some of MOVE’s numerous dogs along with an army of rats scampered out onto the street.³⁹¹ The police then propelled another salvo of teargas into the MOVE compound which unintentionally blew back and enveloped the neighborhood. “The tear gas filled up Pearl

³⁸⁸ “MOVE confrontation in Philadelphia”

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Interview with Police Commissioner, Joseph F. O’Neill in S.A. Palantino, *Frank Rizzo: The Last Big Man In Big City America* (Philadelphia: Camino Books, 1993) 225.

³⁹¹ MOVE 1978 Documentary [http:// angelfire.com](http://angelfire.com) (accessed June 23, 2017)

street it was impossible to see anything.”³⁹² Screams were heard from inside the building and a barrage of gunfire commenced. Return fire seemed to come from the MOVE house.³⁹³ “The cops were running around like a bunch of fools, they didn’t know what to do... They were completely disorganized.”³⁹⁴ Did MOVE somehow gain possession of guns? The inspection of the MOVE compound that was carried out as part of the earlier negotiations and agreement uncovered only a few broken and inoperable rifles. Could MOVE have meticulously concealed the weapons or were others smuggled into their compound? Some who witnessed the police assault on the compound asserted that gun fire had been directed toward the siege site from outside of the line of police encircling the house.³⁹⁵ One such bystander, Richard Maloney of KYW News Radio, swore he witnessed shots being fired from across the street from the MOVE compound.³⁹⁶ Whichever the case may be, a firefighter and several cops were injured. A single bullet in the melee killed one veteran officer by the name of James Ramp.³⁹⁷

After a cease- fire was called, more tear gas and water was jetted into the now shattered MOVE compound. One by one, the remaining adult MOVE members accompanied by their naked children exited the house through the basement windows.³⁹⁸ In the haze of tear gas, MOVE members began to surrender. Some realizing that they were completely overwhelmed, cooperated without further incident. Still, others maintaining a militant stance found the strength to hurl invective toward the police

³⁹² Testimony of neighbor, Barrie Surrals in MOVE Confrontation in Philly The Whole Story, A Documentary. www.youtube.com (accessed June 17, 2017)

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Testimony of neighbor Gail Mobley in “MOVE Confrontation”

³⁹⁵ WCAU-TV news reporter, Marc Howard in “MOVE Confrontation in Philly.”

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Kitty Caparella, “Oh My God- They Shot a Cop!” *The Philadelphia Daily News*, August 9, 1978 p. A-1

³⁹⁸ MOVE 1978 Documentary <http://anglefire.com> (accessed June 23, 2017)

as they were dragged into awaiting squad cars.³⁹⁹ Lastly, MOVE captain Delbert Orr Africa squirmed through a basement window facing 33rd St., extended his arms in a Christ-like pose and capitulated to a cluster of gun-wielding SWAT troops. In an instant, one rogue cop emerged from the cluster and smashed his metal riot helmet into the vanquished Orr's head and effectively knocked his bare-chested frame into the wet city street. Soon after, another cop grabbed Orr's flowing dreadlocks and dragged him onto the sidewalk. Other swat troops followed suit and began to kick, stomp and pummel the man on every vulnerable part of his body. Fists and feet connected with groin, ribs and jaw as Orr's head flailed about like a rag doll.⁴⁰⁰ Once the heinous assault concluded, the MOVE chief was left with "multiple lacerations on the ears, eye and throat, a fractured jaw and a contusion on the left lung and testes."⁴⁰¹ A police lieutenant who witnessed Orr's battering later exclaimed, "That garbage that piece of trash, he's lucky we even let him walk again. If it was up to me I would have buried him!"⁴⁰²

The operation to extract MOVE from the compound was completed by 10 a.m. Within the next hour, city bulldozers were used to tear MOVE headquarters down to the ground.⁴⁰³ Neighbors and onlookers stood in disbelief. Activist and MOVE advocate, Walt Palmer believed there were additional motives for the hasty demolition and was quick to tell a reporter on the scene, "The true reason for the destruction of this house is much more important than stopping the continuation of MOVE."⁴⁰⁴ The crowd of

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Testimony of Carol Mc Clear, Director of Records at Jefferson Medical Center in Adrian Lee, "Delbert Africa Beating Case," *The Evening Bulletin*, May 10, 1979, pg. 9.

⁴⁰² Fraternal Order of Police Chairman, Robert Hertz to ABC news correspondent Leon Dash in "The 1985 Bombing of West Philadelphia" youtube.com (accessed May 2017)

⁴⁰³ Testimony of WCAU news reporter, Marc Howard in "MOVE Confrontation in Philly"

⁴⁰⁴ Terry Palmer in Ibid.

spectators that lingered around the rubble of the MOVE compound began to grow restless. Many of the predominately black throng clapped their hands in unison and chanted “Down with Rizzo.”⁴⁰⁵ Within moments, a cadre of baton-wielding, mounted police arrived on the scene to disperse the crowd and proceeded to chase them into the surrounding neighborhood. Several persons including children, sustained minor injuries in the process.⁴⁰⁶ Later in the afternoon, a press conference was held at Philadelphia City Hall where Mayor Rizzo, Police Commissioner Joseph O’Neil and District attorney, Ed Rendell addressed members of the media. Rendell was the first to speak and began by detailing the charges of murder and conspiracy to murder brought against the adult MOVE members arrested earlier that day. Journalist, Bob Frump from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* was incredulous. He interrupted Rendell midflight and asserted “If the MOVE house was the scene of a murder, why was it torn down?”⁴⁰⁷ Frank Rizzo bellowed loudly, “To keep them from coming back!” Another reporter blurted, “Do you think this will end MOVE?” Rizzo again retorted, “If they bring back the death penalty, I will gladly throw the switch on the electric chair! That will end them for sure!”⁴⁰⁸ Commissioner O’Neil tried to bring levity to the heated exchange between the Mayor and the press by stating, “It was determined that we should go forward with the razing of the residence. One of our primary concerns, one of my personal primary concerns was that this house would become a symbol for them and give them a location to come back to and start all over again.”⁴⁰⁹ In spite of O’Neil’s reasoning, many Philadelphians who had

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Police commissioner, Joseph O’Neil responds to the press in *Frank Rizzo: The Last Big Man In Big City America*, 226.

followed the MOVE kerfuffle wondered about other motives that possibly existed for the hasty demolition. During his time as acting police-commissioner, Frank Rizzo always aspired to apprehend his mark and never ordered the dismantling of a murder scene.⁴¹⁰

An entire year elapsed before all the MOVE members removed from the house and arrested were brought to trial. Although twelve adults were initially arrested, three were subsequently freed. The additional nine were charged with the alleged murder of police officer James Ramp.⁴¹¹ In accord with their distrust of the legal system MOVE waived their right to a trial by jury.⁴¹² Their beaten captain Delbert Orr Africa exclaimed, “That jury will be made up of store-brought negroes from down town and racist whites from North-East Philly.”⁴¹³ Another of the accused, Janine Africa, gave her reasoning, “Being tried by one confused judge who didn’t witness the situation is bad enough... but being tried by twelve confused people is worse.”⁴¹⁴

The Trial

After the trial commenced, it soon became apparent that the prosecution was suspect as there was no ballistic test conducted before the MOVE house was torn down and eight of the sixteen witnesses who were called to the bench testified that the first gunshots fired during the siege emanated from another location west of the police engagement.⁴¹⁵

Countering the testimony of the eight witnesses, about thirty policemen claimed that the

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Murray Dubin, “Revolution Ain’t Verbalized,” A-14

⁴¹² Murray Dubin, “MOVE 9 Waive Jury, Will Defend Themselves,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 19, 1979 F-1.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Murray Dubin, “Nine MOVE Members Convicted, All Guilty in Killing of Officer” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 9, 1980 A-1

initial gunfire was directed from the basement window of the MOVE compound.⁴¹⁶ MOVE responded with characteristic raucousness, were banned from the rest of the proceedings and the case was assigned to court appointed backup attorneys who the nine defendants gave little cooperation.⁴¹⁷ The trial continued to drag on for over nineteen months. An additional tribunal was established to hear the case of the four police officers: Joseph Zagame, Terrence Mulvihill, Lawrence D'Ulisse and Charles Geist were officially charged with simple and aggravated assault during the apprehension of Delbert Orr Africa.⁴¹⁸ After several hundred police and Fraternal Order of Police members stormed City Hall to protest the proceedings an announcement was made that caught the prosecutor and the defense attorney off-balance. The judge proclaimed, "Philadelphia is bleeding to death because of this MOVE tragedy..." and then promptly acquitted the officers.⁴¹⁹ It was plain to many, such as one black police officer who had witnessed Orr's beating and commented "These men in uniform, under the guise of law-enforcement agents kicked, stomped and savagely beat a human being with no regard for the public who might have been watching."⁴²⁰

After a total of twenty-one months, closing arguments began regarding the fates of the MOVE 9 charged with murder in the third degree. Defense attorney, Paul Hetzsneker who was present during the sentencing recalled that, "The judge bought into the prosecutor's theory that MOVE conspired to kill the officer based on what one of them

⁴¹⁶ "Revolution Ain't Verbalized."

⁴¹⁷ A.W. Geiselman Jr. "Bowling to Precedent, No Gags for MOVE," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, January 20, 1980 pg. A-1.

⁴¹⁸ Ken Reid and Ashley Halsey, "Police Chant Protest," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, August 6, 1979 pg. 3-D.

⁴¹⁹ Jan Shaffer, "Judge Acquits Policemen in Beating Before MOVE Case Finalizes," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 3, 1980 pg. A-1.

⁴²⁰ Statement of Philadelphia Police officer Sgt. Alfonse Deal in "Four Officers Named in MOVE Beating," *The Philadelphia Daily News* February 13, 1980, pg. 3.

said almost two years earlier on their front porch as to what they could do if their home was invaded. He then ignored all the important safe guards of each individual member and considered them all guilty by association.”⁴²¹ In spite of the numerous inconsistencies in the case, the absence of intent, and the fact the shooter was never identified, all nine of the adult members of MOVE were sentenced to prison terms ranging from thirty to one-hundred years.⁴²² The trial had been the longest in Philadelphia’s legal history. And with a final price tag of over four-hundred thousand dollars, it was also the most costly.⁴²³

In the eyes of the Rizzo administration and city police, the destruction of their nemesis was almost complete. However, the whereabouts of MOVE’s founder and enigmatic leader Vincent Leaphart, a.k.a. John Africa failed to materialize during the year long stand-off and subsequent trial of his disciples. John Africa was a fugitive, still at large after fleeing Philadelphia and the weapons charges that were brought against him in late 1977.

With the help of a distant relative, John Africa managed to surreptitiously take up residence in Rochester, New York and purchase a small collection of cheap houses in a neglected part of the city.⁴²⁴ In Rochester, the MOVE leader under the pseudonym, “Jimmy Lee Phart” began in earnest to re-boot his back-to-nature lifestyle while establishing a new commune with the few followers who fled along with him from

⁴²¹ Interview with attorney Paul Hensneker in “MOVE 9 Trial,” journalists4mumia www.youtube.com (accessed January 4, 2018)

⁴²² “Nine MOVE Members Convicted, All Guilty in Killing of Officer,” E-17.

⁴²³ “Revolution Ain’t Verbalized,” 14-A

⁴²⁴ “Who Was John Africa?” pp.10.

Philadelphia.⁴²⁵ According to Leaphart's sister, Louise James, the MOVE founder carried on constant communication with his disciples during the entire time the police blockade was erected in front of the now demolished Powelton Village residence. "While geographically there are a few miles between Philly and Rochester, there was actually no distance at all when it came to continued contact with MOVE members here."⁴²⁶ At least during the beginning stages of their time spent in Rochester, John Africa and his small band of transplants managed to fly under the radar, undetected by law enforcement agents. Many residents of the neighborhood where the group was beginning to acclimate themselves, considered the dreadlock wearing clan a bit eccentric, yet a welcomed presence as Leaphart and his fellow fugitives often offered assistance with household tasks such as shoveling snow in the winter.⁴²⁷ The real estate agent who sold Leaphart the properties remembered fondly, "He was an extremely calm, personable guy. You felt at ease talking with him."⁴²⁸

Inevitably, Leaphart and his cohorts began to garner some adverse attention when they began to remodel their new home with the same stylistic appointments of their former headquarters in Powelton Village. The group began in earnest to board shut the windows of their leading residence, tear the porch surround off another property, and dig up the sidewalk so the earth could "breathe."⁴²⁹ Moreover, Leaphart took the liberty of feeding any dog in the neighborhood he came into contact with whatever he felt was appropriate.⁴³⁰ After refusing to comply with one particular dog owner's repeated

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Quoted by Louise Leaphart James in *John Africa... A Childhood Untold* 78.

⁴²⁷ "Who was John Africa" pp.11.

⁴²⁸ Testimony of Andrew Mitrano in Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

complaints, the police were called, an altercation ensued that lead to Leaphart's arrest after he shoved one of the officers.⁴³¹ The incident effectively sent up a smoke signal. On May 13, 1981, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms agents (ATF) converged on MOVE's Rochester residence and apprehended the small cadre at gun point and brought them back to Philadelphia to face conspiracy and weapons charges.⁴³² Upon his arrest, Leaphart boasted "They better start selling tickets for my trial!"⁴³³

The prosecution aided by their star witness Donald Glassey and a few MOVE defectors were poised to prove without a doubt that the man known to his followers as John Africa had stockpiled guns, bombs and materials used to make explosives while aiming to "turn society against itself."⁴³⁴ The case against Leaphart seemed to be airtight. The trial, colloquially known as "John Africa Versus The System" stood in stark contrast to the lengthy "MOVE Nine" debacle.⁴³⁵ Curiously absent were the histrionics that MOVE notoriously brought to almost all of their past court hearings. Instead, Vincent Leaphart proved to be a model defendant and even occasionally dozed off behind his trademark sunglasses during the proceedings.⁴³⁶ As to be expected, Leaphart sustained the MOVE protocol of self- representation and called upon a cavalcade of disciples who fervently championed his character while trumpeting claims such as "John Africa can cure everything from back problems, epilepsy, smoking and marital discord"⁴³⁷ Another

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² *John Africa... A Childhood Untold Until Today* 79.

⁴³³ May 1981 interview with ATF agent Walt Wasyluk in "Who Was John Africa" pp.13

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ "John Africa Versus The System," *The First Day* (official MOVE organization newsletter) pp.1. Temple University Libraries Special Collections Research Center, Box 1129, Folder 14.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Testimony of Alphonso Robbins in Ibid.

former member of MOVE gave testimony to the long history of police brutality that the group was subjected to. One particular recollection of a brutal beating a MOVE member received while in police custody compelled Leaphart to sob uncontrollably and blurt out, “Stop it! Enough!”⁴³⁸

When the time came for the closing arguments to commence, Leaphart was called forth and addressed the court by saying, “Ona MOVE” and then proceeded to give a long emotional and metaphor laden sermon outlining his life as a revolutionary. “We (MOVE) are not a fighting people. We are not out there fighting cops for the sake of fighting cops. They are fighting us because they want to uphold this industry. I have been a revolutionary my entire life. Revolution means to turn, generate and activate what is right. It doesn’t mean you should be evil and kill and bomb people.”⁴³⁹ Through a flood of tears, Leaphart proclaimed, “I’m not a guilty man, I’m an innocent man! I didn’t come here to make trouble or bring trouble. But to bring the truth, and goddammit that’s what I’m going to do!”⁴⁴⁰ According to one witness, “John Africa’s closing argument was, so profound, so clear and so true that it rocked everybody in the courtroom. Jurors had tears in their eyes. The verdict of not guilty was read out loudly and triumphantly.”⁴⁴¹ Leaphart stood up, grinned widely, and extended his hand to the ATF agent who arrested him, and said “No hard feelings.”⁴⁴² Upon exiting the courthouse the man known to his followers as John Africa was swarmed with well-wishers who presented him with a gift basket of

⁴³⁸ A.W. Geiselman Jr., “Stop it Enough! MOVE cultist yells” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, Jul 10, 1981.

⁴³⁹ A.W. Geiselman Jr., “MOVE Founder asks Acquittal,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, July 17, 1981.

⁴⁴⁰ Closing statement of *United States of America vs. Vincent Leaphart* in Dick Cooper, “MOVE leader cleared: U.S. Jury Acquits Leaphart, 1 other,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 23, 1981. See also *John Africa... Childhood Untold Until Today* 83.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid. and Testimony of Mo Africa in “MOVE!” www.youtube.com (accessed November 16, 2016)

⁴⁴² Testimony of ATF agent Walt Wasyluk in “Who was John Africa?”

fresh fruit and vegetables. In the midst of the adulation, Leaphart blurted out “I licked them!”⁴⁴³ These words would be the last that John Africa ever pronounced in public again as he and his MOVE cohorts dropped from view.

The destruction of the MOVE headquarters and specifically the brutal beating of one of the commune’s members in plain view galvanized the city’s black community. The focus of their anger was now directed entirely toward mayor, Frank Rizzo.⁴⁴⁴ In the midst of the MOVE confrontation, Rizzo had led a drive to amend a city charter to allow him to run for a third term.⁴⁴⁵ At one particular rally, Rizzo snarled, “Minorities in this city are getting special treatment, people like you and me, we’re tired of being treated like second class citizens!”⁴⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Rizzo’s drive to run as a mayoral candidate for a third term was doomed. His brutal directive during the MOVE confrontation became inextricably entwined with opposition to charter change. A “Vote No to Charter Change” campaign assembled by a broad coalition of blacks and white liberals soundly defeated Rizzo’s bid by a two-to-one margin.⁴⁴⁷ One journalist was quick to observe, “MOVE seemed to disappear, and Rizzo claimed victory. Yet, the outcry over Rizzo’s tactics helped finish his career. He never won another election in Philadelphia again.”⁴⁴⁸

After Rizzo’s referendum for charter change was defeated, a former Democratic congressman by the name of William J. Green was elected mayor of Philadelphia. The liberal Green moved swiftly to appease the city’s black contingent. After City

⁴⁴³ John Africa... 89.

⁴⁴⁴ *Frank Rizzo: The Last Big Man in Big City America* 227.

⁴⁴⁵ *Up South*, 323.

⁴⁴⁶ Jill Porter, “Vote White,” *The Philadelphia Daily News*, September 22, 1978 p.2.

⁴⁴⁷ *Up South*, 323.

⁴⁴⁸ Jim Quinn, “They Bombed in West Philly,” *The Village Voice*, May 28, 1985 p. 1.

Councilman, Lucien Blackwell declared, “Now it is time for Philadelphia to grow up by recognizing a qualified black public servant.”⁴⁴⁹ Green, in turn, appointed Wilson Goode as Philadelphia’s first African-American city manager.

⁴⁴⁹ Lucien Blackwell quoted in Richard A Keiser, *The Rise of the Biracial Coalition in Philadelphia* 231.

Chapter 5

Revolution Is Forever, 6221 Osage Avenue

The burning of MOVE in 1985 was indeed the crescendo in Philadelphia's long narrative of systemic police brutality. After the MOVE home and the surrounding neighborhood burned to the ground, it was clear that it was unlikely to impossible that had MOVE landed in a white neighborhood, the same tactics would have been employed to remove them.⁴⁵⁰ Dr. Cornell West contends, "The bomb drop on the MOVE group is a part of what has been happening for the last four hundred years."⁴⁵¹ According to Matthew Countryman, by the late 1970s, Black Power radicalism was in decline and that the extermination of MOVE in 1985 was the result of an unrealized and unfulfilled vision of the civil rights and the Black Power Movements.⁴⁵² Countryman argues, "In the absence of mass political activism for racial justice, what had once seemed the transformative potential of black urban politics was consumed in the same fiery combustion that took the lives of six MOVE members and five of their children as well as the homes and dreams of sixty-one neighboring families."⁴⁵³

The ostensible demise of the MOVE organization dovetailed with the decline of other radicalized counterculture groups of their time. As previously noted, by the mid-1970s American youth had already begun to lose interest in the bluster of some of the leading counterculture torchbearers. One law enforcement official noted, "The wave of student

⁴⁵⁰ See testimony of Osage resident Clifford Bond in *Let The Fire Burn*

⁴⁵¹ "Cornell West on MOVE," www.youtube.com (accessed January 12, 2018)

⁴⁵² Countryman, *Up South*, 288.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.* 326.

uprising and radicalism had run its course.”⁴⁵⁴ The SDS splinter organization, known as the Weathermen, eventually exhausted and flat-lined. Ultra-Leftist revolutionaries belonging to the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacional (FALN), The Black Liberation Army and the New World Liberation Front were either violently dispatched or sentenced to long prison terms. Hippy figure-head Abbie Hoffman succumbed to drug addiction.⁴⁵⁵ Local Philadelphia rabble-rouser, Ira Einhorn was sentenced in absentia for the grizzly murder of his girlfriend.⁴⁵⁶ And infamously, a career criminal by the name of Charles Manson, succeeded in perverting the familiar conception of the serene hippy commune by leading his own so-called “family” on a killing spree in southern California.⁴⁵⁷ Former Black Panther leader, Eldridge Cleaver dejectedly told one interviewer during the 1970s that the revolution was officially over.⁴⁵⁸ The “law and order” rhetoric espoused by Richard Nixon in his first inaugural address and then proliferated by regional sycophants the likes of Frank Rizzo, continued to draw together a growing constituency of Americans who balked at the cultural disorientation of the late 1960s and early 70s. Historian Jeremi Suri asserts, “A decade after 1969, the so-called “neoconservatives” in the United States tapped into this sentiment when they promoted a political program of a “new morning in America,” and a candidate, Ronald Reagan who in 1980 turned the contested memories of the 1960s into fodder for a cultural program

⁴⁵⁴ Danial Coulson and Sharon Shannon, *No Heroes: Inside the FBI's Secret Counter-Terror Force* (New York: Mass Market Paperbacks, 1999) 75.

⁴⁵⁵ Marty Jerger, *Abbie Hoffman: American Rebel*, (New York: Rutgers University Press, 1992)

⁴⁵⁶ Remy Melina, “Earth Day co-founder killed and composted his girlfriend,” NBC-News, LifesLittleMysteries.com (accessed October 25, 2017)

⁴⁵⁷ Robin Altman, “Sympathy for the Devil: Charles Manson’s Exploitation of California’s 1960s Counter Culture,” Masters Thesis, University of Colorado, 2015 <https://scholar.Colorado.edu> (accessed December 15, 2017)

⁴⁵⁸ “France Rejects Request From Cleaver for Asylum,” *The New York Times*, May 20, 1973 pg. 17. www.nytimes.com/archives/1973 (accessed December 14, 2017)

that self-consciously fused Christian fundamentalism with neoconservative politics.”⁴⁵⁹

Against this backdrop, communal living, counterculture groups and self-stylized revolutionaries the likes of MOVE had become anachronisms.⁴⁶⁰ However, during this time the outwardly out of step radical group reemerged and openly defied official political power.

MOVE’s decision to withdraw from the public sphere after two dramatic trials was only an interlude before the greatest calamity the city would ever know. The jailing of the MOVE 9 along with the demolition of their collective home and headquarters was merely an interruption of their grandiose aims. The demolition of the Powelton Village home and the forced jettisoning of the Rochester properties rendered Vincent Leaphart and his remaining followers destitute. It was then that Leaphart’s sister Louise James allowed the group, including some of the children of the incarcerated MOVE 9, to take up residence at her home at 6221 Osage Avenue in Cobbs Creek.⁴⁶¹ Although the transition was only a scant few miles from their former headquarters, the almost all black, middle class neighborhood that surrounded James’s West Philadelphia home was markedly different from the liberal and integrated Powelton Village. And unlike Powelton Village, which is situated on the cusp of two college campuses, Cobbs Creek is a home owning neighborhood. The Urban League of Philadelphia estimated that by the early 1980s, nearly fifty-two percent of all black Philadelphians residing in Cobbs Creek owned their own homes with approximately twenty-five percent of their total income allocated to the

⁴⁵⁹ Jeremi Suri, “The Rise and Fall of an International Counterculture, 1960-1975,” *The American Historical Review* Vol. 114, No. 1 (February, 2009): 64.

⁴⁶⁰ For additional information regarding the demise of the radical left see Bryan Burrough’s, *Days of Rage: America’s Radical Underground, the FBI, and the Forgotten Age of Revolutionary Violence* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015) 6,535.

⁴⁶¹ *John Africa*... 88.

costs of ownership.⁴⁶² Unsurprisingly, Cobbs Creek residents demonstrated a concern for being recognized by Philadelphia's mainstream white society as a respectable class of the community, especially in contrast to a black, radical, counterculture group.⁴⁶³

As previously documented, the members of MOVE displayed no compunction when lambasting black leaders that they deemed as ineffectual. However, it was the established black bourgeoisie that MOVE reserved the most contempt for. John Africa stated, "It is impossible for Black folks to solve the problem of inequality while endorsing and supporting this higher, lower class system...they only take on the nature of the oppressor, while condoning the oppression of themselves and others."⁴⁶⁴

Nevertheless, some of the residents welcomed the displaced group to the community, especially those who had advocated for MOVE during the blockade five years earlier. One Osage Avenue resident recalled, "We welcomed them, and their children played with our children. We even bought them winter coats."⁴⁶⁵ The period of outward quiescence between the years 1981 to 1983 only served to cloak MOVE's revitalization. According to Louise James, "John Africa and company went immediately to work to try and get jailed MOVE members free."⁴⁶⁶ Although he became increasingly reclusive, Vincent Leaphart directed and delegated authority to several of the adult MOVE

⁴⁶² 1985 annual report of the Urban League of Philadelphia in *Discourse and Destruction* 65.

⁴⁶³ J.M. Floyd-Thomas, "The Burning of Rebellious Thoughts" 18.

⁴⁶⁴ Interview with Vincent Leaphart a.k.a. John Africa in "On The MOVE," *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 29, 1975 pg. 12.

⁴⁶⁵ Transcript of the Philadelphia Special Commission to Investigate the MOVE Crisis in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 28, 1985, Special section, p. 3-C.

⁴⁶⁶ *John Africa...* 88.

members who transitioned along with him to Rochester and then back to Philadelphia before his subsequent trial.

Adult MOVE Members

Vincent Leaphart, 54

Raymond Foster, 50

Rhonda Harris, 30

Ramona Johnson, 30

James Conrad Hampton, 26

Theresa Brooks, 26

Frank James, 26

Children

Tomaso, 9

Katricia “Tree” Dotson, 15

Zenett Dotson, 13

Delicia Phillips, 11

Phil Philips, 12

Michael Moses Ward “Birdie,” 13

Ramona Africa

The MOVE 9 trial had a profound impact on new members such as Ramona Johnson Africa, one of the survivors of the fatal bombing. Born to a single mother in West Philadelphia in 1955, Ramona lived a fairly idyllic life surrounded by her aunts, grandmother, and her own mother who made a respectable living as a beautician.⁴⁶⁷ As she came of age in the early 1970s, she became intensely aware of the Black Panther Party, Angela Davis and other luminaries of the Black Power movement.⁴⁶⁸ Ramona, like other youths in her local, was exposed to the breadth of police violence that was consistently meted out to Philadelphia’s black populace. She recalled, “There was one brother from the Nation of Islam who was cuffed at a demonstration and had his brains

⁴⁶⁷ Inside The Activist Studio, Ramona Africa, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture onamove.com

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

blown out right on the sidewalk.”⁴⁶⁹ Yet, it was one particular incident she experienced as a senior at West Catholic High School that ignited her passion for activism. “Since we (black students) were disallowed to have a Black Student Union we instead formed a Black Studies group. We designed a presentation for Black History Month that many faculty members claimed was extremely well done. However, when our principle, a Catholic priest, congratulated our group during morning announcements, he exclaimed, ‘Welcome to the human race...’ I was furious.”⁴⁷⁰ After high school, Ramona Johnson enrolled at Temple University with the hopes of one day attending law school.⁴⁷¹ While at Temple, she entered into a work-study program in the Philadelphia Housing Authority and busied herself advocating for the city’s poor.⁴⁷² During Ramona’s last year in college, she became aware of MOVE through the constant media coverage of the Powelton fiasco. Ramona hastened to attend the proceedings that eventually resulted in the sentencing of the MOVE 9 and was completely awestruck by what she witnessed. “What was going on in that courtroom didn’t even remotely resemble what I had learned in my classwork.”⁴⁷³ “The trial was nothing but a formality, the conclusion was already set, it didn’t matter how many lies that MOVE people exposed.”⁴⁷⁴ After Ramona and several spectators raised their voices in protest against Judge Lynn Abraham’s serial contempt of court charges, she and several other MOVE supporters were given sixty days

⁴⁶⁹ Conveyed to author May 2017

⁴⁷⁰ Inside the Activist Studio

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² “Morning Feed” web cast, interview of Ramona Africa and Kareem Howard, G-Town Radio, mixcloud.com, May 2017.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Ramona Africa Interview: “The MOVE 9 Trial,” journalists4mumia.com (accessed November 19, 2017)

in the county jail.⁴⁷⁵ The jailing was an epiphany for Ramona Johnson, who decided that she would then join the MOVE family. By late 1979, she was elevated to the position of “Communication Minister,” and eventually took up residence on Osage Avenue with John Africa and the remaining MOVE retinue.⁴⁷⁶

Soon after their arrival in Cobbs Creek, MOVE began in earnest to commence pressing city officials and politicians to release the incarcerated MOVE 9. The newly appointed city managing director, Wilson Goode, recalled one particular confrontation after his assistant called to tell him that a man by the name of Gerald Ford Africa wanted to meet with him. Later that week, “I stood looking at a tall robust man with a serious, unsmiling face, framed by a veil of long dreadlocks who began by saying “I’m here on serious business. My brothers and sisters are in jail, and I want you he emphasized *you* to get them out. From the beginning, the conversation was a no-win situation. My feelings stirred uneasily as I failed to shake the nagging thought that this would not be the last time I’d encounter MOVE.”⁴⁷⁷

Goode’s predictions were spot-on. When MOVE failed to achieve their desired results after pressing city officials, they began a campaign of agitating their new neighbors. It was only a matter of time before Louise James’s home at 6221 Osage Avenue resembled the former Powelton Village headquarters as naked children and animals ran amok, trash

⁴⁷⁵ Inside the Activist Studio, *While serving during the administration of Frank Rizzo, Lynn Abraham was referred to as the “Queen of Death” due to her routine demands for the death penalty. See Tina Rosenberg, “The Deadliest D.A.,” *The New York Times*, July 16, 1995. And Ed Pinkerton, “America’s Deadliest Prosecutors: 5 Lawyers, 440 Death Sentences,” *The Guardian U.K.* April, 2000 www.theguardian.com (accessed January 12, 2018)

⁴⁷⁶ “Morning Feed”

⁴⁷⁷ W. Wilson Goode with Joann Stevens, *In Goode Faith: Philadelphia’s First Black Mayor Tells His Story* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 1992) 164-65.

and debris was strewn in all corners of the yard, and the windows were boarded up.⁴⁷⁸ An exasperated Osage resident remembered having to complain to city officials stating, “At first I complained directly to them about trash and garbage laid near our property and they were cooperative. They would say O.K. and they would move things. But as time went on conditions just grew continuously worse.”⁴⁷⁹

MOVE directed all of their energies toward the release of the MOVE 9 by provoking the city into action during their residence at Osage. On Christmas Eve 1983, a loud shriek was heard throughout Osage avenue. An angry voice shouted from what sounded like a bullhorn, “Mother fucking Santa Claus!”⁴⁸⁰ After this introduction, MOVE conducted a 36 hour long invective-filled harangue of the neighborhood over a roof mounted public address system. This was the beginning of many regularly occurring amplified attacks.⁴⁸¹ The son of Louise James, Frank Africa bellowed, “Hey you mother-fuckers, we are going to come after your mothers! All you greedy ass mother-fuckers, Get on down here!”⁴⁸² One resident recalled, “The vulgarity was unbelievable. My wife just sat up in bed at night and cried. We just hoped that the city would take action.”⁴⁸³

MOVE’s lack of hygiene also again became an issue as rats, mice and roaches were now beginning to infiltrate the homes of residents nearest the group’s confines. One resident remembered, “The day I pulled up a window shade and it was black with bugs

⁴⁷⁸ Transcript of the Philadelphia Special Commission to Investigate the MOVE Crisis, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 28, 1985, Special Section, p.3-C.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ TPSC, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 28, 1985

⁴⁸² Commentary by Osage Avenue resident, Lloyd Foster in *Let The Fire Burn*.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

and I almost vomited.”⁴⁸⁴ Another man living on Osage avenue was assaulted by MOVE members who objected to the killing of insects after he contracted an exterminator to rid his own home of the pests.⁴⁸⁵

By the time MOVE reconvened on Osage Avenue, black Philadelphia had almost completely abandoned supporting the group.⁴⁸⁶ Since Rizzo’s reign of police brutality was their chief concern, most blacks were still willing to side with the group during the 1978 blockade in Powelton Village. However, they were less willing to empathize with the organization after they moved to Osage Avenue. Despite the growing criticism by black leaders and residence alike, MOVE continued to implement “The strategy of John Africa.” Their verbal harangues and unkempt home in the midst of the West Philly, blue-collar hamlet was in fact part of this particular strategy. Gerald Ford Africa explained, “Our use of profanity was not to impose on the neighbors rights but to inspire them.”⁴⁸⁷ Firstly, the radical group still held their position that the aforementioned MOVE 9 should be freed at once. The still jailed Delbert Africa remembered, “Our people were telling the Osage neighbors, all the complaints you have, why don’t you take them to the city? Tell them the reason MOVE is doing this is because they want their people home. The reason our people were doing this is because no one will listen.”⁴⁸⁸

In the midst of the growing unrest on Osage Avenue, Philadelphia elected its first African-American mayor, Wilson Goode, in November of 1983. William Green, who

⁴⁸⁴ Testimony of Osage resident Lloyd Wilson in Murrey Dubin, “MOVE House Stirs Neighbors Anger,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* May 2, 1983 1-B

⁴⁸⁵ Report of Philadelphia Special Investigation Commission, Temple law Quarterly pg. 17

⁴⁸⁶ Opinion of resident, Florence Kennedy in Margot Harry *Attention MOVE!* 190.

⁴⁸⁷ Interview of Gerald Ford Africa in “1985 Bombing of West Philly.”

⁴⁸⁸ Delbert Africa interviewed by Paul Wahrhaftig in *The MOVE Crisis in Philadelphia*, 108.

soldiered through a successful single mayoral term as a foil to the draconian Frank Rizzo, decided not to run again for the office of Mayor. Green's decision effectively paved the way for his appointed City Managing Director, Wilson Goode, to throw his hat into the ring. After a "Draft Goode for Mayor" campaign was established, Goode understood that he was about to "embark on one of the greatest adventures of my life."⁴⁸⁹ Entering into his first term, Goode was entirely cognizant of the challenges that lay before him. He recalled, "The Philadelphia I inherited as the city's first African American mayor was on the verge of collapse, slowly hemorrhaging to death from high inflation, a declining population, and an anemic revenue base created by the exodus of thousands of jobs."⁴⁹⁰

Aside from inheriting Philadelphia's many-fold economic woes, Wilson Goode's first term as mayor was also strained by the same peculiar challenges and baggage that other black elected officials often carry with them into their respective offices. In *Black Representation and Urban Policy*, Albert Karing and Susan Welch concur that "black mayors and council members have special problems; they must act swiftly to assure the black electorate that they are committed to redressing long-standing grievances, but there are powerful counter-forces from the white community pressing for only cautious movement."⁴⁹¹ Suzanne Ife Williams equates black officials elected in the United States "to the indigenous officials of developing nations that are used as a smoke screen to hide the continual rape and exploitation of the people." She continued, "They obfuscate the major issues and lead the people into a stupor of confusion as they look for these leaders

⁴⁸⁹ *In Goode Faith* 174-190.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 189

⁴⁹¹ Albert Karing and Susan Welch, *Black Representation and Urban Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) 112.

to deliver them in the face of increasing oppression. In fact, black mayors have a detrimental effect on community agitation for change, as faith in the system increases.”⁴⁹²

In *Wilson Goode: The Black Mayor as Urban Entrepreneur*, John F. Bauman compares Goode to the greater collective of black mayors that emerged during the early 1980s. Specifically, Goode’s supposed lack of political savvy, indebtedness to Philadelphia machine politics, and dependency on white patronage.⁴⁹³

In his autobiography, *In Goode Faith*, Wilson Goode lamented that perhaps the greatest challenge to his potency when exercising his official duties was his inheritance of the Philadelphia police force, which had been trained and groomed during Frank Rizzo’s tenure as commissioner and mayor. Then current police commissioner, Gregore Sambor, had been a close affiliate of Rizzo and immediately proposed a challenge to Goode’s authority. Attorney Charles Bowser recalled after serving on the MOVE commission hearings that, “The mayor had been warned that Sambor was not a good police commissioner. Goode consulted another former police commissioner who confided in him that Sambor was a flake.”⁴⁹⁴ Sambor was also fond of breaking with the tradition of the commissioner as plain-clothes administrator, and displayed the unorthodox habit of dressing in a military style uniform with a four star epaulet emblazoned on his chest.⁴⁹⁵ Goode recalled:

At first I thought it was an interesting thing to do. But the more I saw Sambor in that uniform, the more I was reminded of a general commanding his army. Furthermore, it became increasingly clear that Sambor didn’t respect me. Early in

⁴⁹² *Philadelphia/MOVE*, 242.

⁴⁹³ John F. Bauman, “Wilson Goode: The Black Mayor as Urban Entrepreneur,” *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Summer, 1992): 141-158.

⁴⁹⁴ Charles W. Bowser, *Let The Bunker Burn: The Final Battle With MOVE* (Philadelphia: Camino Books, 1989) 51.

⁴⁹⁵ *In Goode Faith*, 212.

my term I'd heard rumors about him making jokes at parties about me or complaining to friends about taking orders from a black man whom he saw as not worthy of being his boss.⁴⁹⁶

During Wilson Goode's first term in office, the MOVE group continued to expedite their objective for the release of its' incarcerated members. In addition to the continued loudspeaker harangues and threats hurled at the entire neighborhood. MOVE now took to task of obscuring all the windows of their home with slatted 2 x 4s and constructing what can only be described as a "bunker" on the roof.⁴⁹⁷ The bunker was fashioned of felled trees, lumber, corrugated steel and then finally sheathed with ply-wood. Complete with un-glazed windows that served as "shooting" holes, the structure cast an ominous presence on Osage Avenue.⁴⁹⁸

Agitated Osage residents began a steady stream of confrontations with Mayor Goode at his office in City Hall and demanded that he formulate an action plan for evicting MOVE. Fearing a rehash of the standoff that drew out in Powelton Village, Goode simply replied with a series of stall tactics and half- hearted assurances that "he would look into the matter."⁴⁹⁹ By his own account he told one exasperated neighbor, "I just can't go in there and force people out because you don't like them."⁵⁰⁰ And to another resident his response was rhetorical, "Why can't you all deal with it? It's a black on black

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ "MOVE-ing Accounts of Osage," *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 11, 1985, pg. 1.

⁴⁹⁸ Described by Michael Moses Ward "Birdie Africa" to city official Leo Brooks in *Let The Fire Burn*.

⁴⁹⁹ "Bunker Being Built in Preparation for Confrontation with Police," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 5, 1985, 1-B.

⁵⁰⁰ *In Goode Faith*, 208.

issue.”⁵⁰¹ It was now becoming painfully clear to the beleaguered citizens of Osage Avenue that they were merely pawns in MOVE’s chess game with the city.⁵⁰²

Even though mayor Wilson Goode adopted a hands-off approach to MOVE, fearing a recap of the 1978 Powelton fiasco, the police were waiting for the opportune moment to enact revenge on MOVE for the killing of James Ramp and the subsequent acquittal of John Africa.⁵⁰³ Aside from stalling the Osage avenue residents, Goode forbade any city officials with the exception of the police from making contact with the radical group.⁵⁰⁴ His directive even extended to the city Construction Code official, who apparently offered to place a stop work order on the continuous illegal modifications that MOVE made on the Osage Avenue property that they inhabited.⁵⁰⁵ In spite of the mayor’s unavailing tactic of avoidance, the police who had been surreptitiously surveilling the constantly mutating house to strategize a plan of action.⁵⁰⁶ In fact, Bulletin boards in many police precincts displayed a missive that read, “MOVE 1, POLICE 0.”⁵⁰⁷

The rising media coverage following the Osage neighbor’s complaints, police agitation, and pressure from city officials forced mayor Goode to take more assertive action.⁵⁰⁸ Goode and his managing director Leo Brooks assembled a meeting with councilman, Lucian Blackwell, police commissioner, Gregore Sambor and district attorney Ed Rendell. Almost immediately Rendell produced a dossier detailing that some

⁵⁰¹ Testimony of community activist, Novella Williams interview in “They Bombed in West Philly.”

⁵⁰² Testimony of Clifford Brown in MOVE Commission Hearings segment of *Let The Fire Burn*.

⁵⁰³ *In Goode Faith*, 211.

⁵⁰⁴ “The MOVE Commission Hearing Transcripts” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 28, 1985 pg. C-9.

⁵⁰⁵ Testimony of Former Commissioner of Licenses and Inspections, Raymond Tate in *Ibid*.

⁵⁰⁶ “The MOVE 9 Trial”

⁵⁰⁷ “Who Was John Africa”

⁵⁰⁸ *In Goode Faith*, 210.

of the MOVE members had outstanding warrants and parole violations.⁵⁰⁹ Goode later claimed that he initially felt uncertain if the city had legal cause to intervene in the lives of the MOVE members but after reading the dossier he now believed he had the leverage to take action.⁵¹⁰ On Friday morning May 10, 1985, Mayor Goode called Commissioner Sambor to his chambers one final time in order to review the agreed upon plan for evicting and apprehending MOVE.⁵¹¹ Sambor allegedly put forth to Goode a number of points. The first priority would be to pick up the children. Then he (Sambor) would personally serve the arrest warrants, after which, high-powered water hoses would be used to dislodge the bunker. The commissioner then assured Goode that police would only shoot at targets that were firing first, as not to risk the lives of MOVE members, police officers and firefighters. Lastly, (as requested by Goode) Sambor asserted, “I will not use police officers who were part of the August 8, 1978, confrontation against MOVE. We don’t want any hot heads out there.”⁵¹²

Mayor Goode’s fears about police aggression came to fruition the following Sunday May 12, when all of the Osage residents were asked to vacate their homes and a two block area was cleared and cordoned off. However, the MOVE children who had been playing in the park that day were allowed to meander back to the compound at 6221 Osage.⁵¹³ In the early morning hours of Monday May 13, the police arrived on the scene with a bomb disposal squad and hundreds of officers who were given free range select

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid, 211.

⁵¹¹ *In Goode Faith*, 214.

⁵¹² Ibid, 214-215.

⁵¹³ “The Findings , Conclusions and Recommendations of the Philadelphia Special Investigations Commission,” March 6, 1986 pg. 31 Temple University Archives Special Collections

their own firearms at the police firing range.⁵¹⁴ The plethora of weaponry that they bought to Osage Ave included : M-16s, 12 gauge shotguns loaded with .00 buckshot, Uzi submachine guns, 357 magnums, several Browning Automatic rifles, a 20mm anti- tank gun, two .50 caliber machine guns, a .45 caliber Thomson machine gun, 30.06 rifles, and .22 caliber rifles outfitted with scopes and silencers.⁵¹⁵

At approximately 5:30 a.m. Gregore Sambor announced through a bullhorn, “Attention MOVE, This is America. You must obey the laws of the United States.”⁵¹⁶ He then demanded that the MOVE members with outstanding warrants exit the building. A male voice heard on the MOVE P.A. system purportedly retorted, “Come on in here and get us. You will be lying bloody in the street.”⁵¹⁷ The police waited for a total of fifteen minutes, then commenced to storm the adjacent row homes situated on the right and left side elevations of the MOVE compound at 6221 Osage. They then blew holes in the parting wall from the adjoining row home and inserted tear gas. Simultaneously, a torrent of water was showered down on the roof top bunker via fire department water cannons.⁵¹⁸

According to the testimony of City director Leo Brookes, once the initial maneuver to extract MOVE commenced, gunshots were fired from the MOVE house, “.50 caliber machine guns in every direction.”⁵¹⁹ The police responded by unleashing a ninety-minute salvo of gunfire and explosives into the front of the row home and succeeded in

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Harry, *Attention MOVE!* pg. 50.

⁵¹⁷ Grand Jury report pg. 279 in Linn Washington, “A Double Standard of Justice?” *Yale Journal of Law and Liberation*, Vol. 1 Article 7 (1989): 75.

⁵¹⁸ Special Investigation Commission

⁵¹⁹ Testimony of Gregore Sambor, MOVE Commission Hearings in *Let The Fire Burn*

completely blowing the front porch to smithereens. Over ten thousand rounds of ammunition were exhausted during this time frame.⁵²⁰

By late afternoon, there was still no sign of MOVE's willingness to surrender. Police commissioner Sambor then ordered the Bomb Disposal Unit to construct a device which could level the still intact roof top bunker. Officers Frank Powell and William Klein were dispatched to fashion the incendiary mechanism from a combination of C-4 plastic explosive and Tovex TR2, a commercial combustible used to dig trenches in the mining industry.⁵²¹ During his time in the Marine Corps, Klein had received extensive training in the detonation and disposal of explosives and was well aware of the ramifications of using the two highly volatile agents. Powell on the other hand, had only completed two-weeks- worth of training in the handling of bombs.⁵²²

The two officers then commandeered a State Police helicopter which they flew to the West end neighborhood. Once over the MOVE compound, they dropped the explosive material, ensconced in a satchel, onto the bunker below.⁵²³ The explosion ripped the bunker apart but also ignited a large gasoline can along with the highly flammable asphalt roof covering that was a part of the row-home construction. In his infinite wisdom, Sambor gave the order to let the fire burn because he believed that MOVE would shoot the firemen.⁵²⁴ The fire continued to rage for over forty-five minutes. Several police officers stood laughing, while one exclaimed "Why didn't you just blow them the fuck

⁵²⁰ Findings of Special Investigation Commission

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Debbie Price and Joseph R. Daughen, "Explosive Discrepancy," *Philadelphia Daily News* May 25, 1985 See also Charles Bowser, *Let The Bunker Burn*, 17.

⁵²³ Video footage in *Let The Fire Burn*

⁵²⁴ Findings of Special Investigation

out of there Bill? (William Klein) They (MOVE) won't call the police commissioner a motherfucker anymore!"⁵²⁵ However, while Sambor and his underlings stared at the source of their amusement, the flames began to leap towards the other adjoining houses along Osage Ave.

Wilson Goode remained sequestered in his chambers and viewed the imbroglio on "an old T.V. set with poor reception" because unknown members of his police force had targeted him for death if he came near Sixty-Second Street and Osage Avenue.⁵²⁶ The mayor who admitted that his own police commissioner didn't respect him, simply abdicated all of his authority to the police.⁵²⁷ According to Goode, "Three people who had always provided me with reliable information, came to me and told me that if I went to the MOVE scene I would catch a bullet with my name on it! It would be made to look like an accident."⁵²⁸ In all likelihood, the threat to Goode's life was highly plausible. Considering that Sambor ignored the Mayor's direct order to bar officers involved in the 1978 Powelton ordeal from participating in the Osage operation.⁵²⁹ In actuality, there was a large collective of officers from the prior standoff that were on the scene at Osage. Not merely assigned to support roles, but as a part of the stakeout squad that fired on the MOVE compound and then later patrolled the perimeter of the burning building with the aims of apprehending escaping MOVE members.⁵³⁰ Sambor's unconscionability was blatantly evident, as he noticeably positioned police officers, Terrance Mulvihill and Lawrence D'Ulisse, in the west bound section of the rear ally behind the burning MOVE

⁵²⁵ Excerpt from "Stakeout Training Video" exhibited during Special Investigation. See *Let The Fire Burn*.

⁵²⁶ *In Goode Faith* 230.

⁵²⁷ Charles Bowser in "MOVE Commission Hearings."

⁵²⁸ As told by Wilson Goode in *Ibid*, 218.

⁵²⁹ Testimony of Gregore Sambor in *Let The Fire Burn*

⁵³⁰ "Findings and conclusions" sec. C15.

compound. These, were of course the identical officers that beat Delbert Africa mercilessly in 1978!⁵³¹

As the fire raged, dozens of dwellings in the periphery were soon engulfed, and the Osage residents who gathered at the command center, stood bewildered. A Man exclaimed, “It’s like another Vietnam out here!”⁵³² Another shouted, “This is no different than South Africa!”⁵³³ And through a flood of tears one resident emoted “This was my home for twenty years... now completely destroyed... It’s just not fair!”⁵³⁴

The war-weary collective MOVE members huddled in the basement of the nearly burned out compound under wet blankets.⁵³⁵ Upon the explosion, Frank James was severely wounded when a radiator valve was blown into his upper thigh.⁵³⁶ One side of Conrad Hampton’s face was burned so severely it appeared to be melting.⁵³⁷ And the youngest child, Tomaso was slowly succumbing to massive smoke inhalation as he “lay whimpering and then suddenly became silent.”⁵³⁸ Unanimously, it was decided that there were clearly only two choices, incinerate in the fire or make a break into the ally and risk being shot by the roving police.

Conrad retrieved a large adjustable wrench and pried the track off the garage door that had been pad-locked shut. Opening it swiftly, he screamed at the top of his lungs, “The

⁵³¹ Ibid. and Video testimony in *Let The Fire Burn*.

⁵³² *Let The Fire Burn*

⁵³³ Berte Joubert, “Philadelphia: Police Holocaust,” *Workers World*, May 23, 1985 pg. A-1.

⁵³⁴ Resident, Janice Walker interview with WCAU -10 in *Let The Fire Burn*

⁵³⁵ Testimony of Michael Moses Ward “Birdie Africa” in *Let It Burn*

⁵³⁶ Finding of independent medical examiner retained by Philadelphia Special Investigations Committee in William Marrimow, “Believed to be unspent bullet in MOVE body: City Staff had failed to find it,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 8, 1985. Special Collections, Temple University. Box 1299, Folder 22.

⁵³⁷ Testimony of Michael Moses Ward in *Let it Burn*

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

kids are coming out!!” but was met with a burst of gunfire.⁵³⁹ Immediately, he took cover. But after a several minute lull he hurried the children into the back yard. The older ones came out first. Katricia, Zenetta, Delicia and Phil all leaped over the concrete block wall that bordered the property and ran down the back ally, west bound toward Cobbs Creek Parkway.⁵⁴⁰ Ramona Africa made a break, climbed on top of the wall and led up a dazed and listless Birdie. Pathetically, Birdie fainted and fell with a thud into a knee-deep water slough made from the deluge guns that morning.⁵⁴¹

In the east side of the ally, officers James Berghanhaier and Thomas Mellor witnessed the wretched scene of Birdie lying in the water. Berghanhaier, who reflected on his own children, exclaimed, “I’m going to get the kid!” Mellor responded, “Be careful, it could be a trap.” Berghanhaier then retorted, “No, this one’s for real. Hold my shot gun and give me cover. I’m going in...”⁵⁴²

It wasn’t until almost midnight before the six-alarm blaze which traveled the length of Osage Avenue and then along the adjacent block of Pine Street was under control. In the end, sixty-one homes were destroyed and 250 residents were left homeless.⁵⁴³ Only two MOVE members were accounted for. Ramona Johnson Africa was arrested at gun point and Birdie whisked away by the Philadelphia children’s alliance team. Both were treated for third degree burns.⁵⁴⁴

⁵³⁹ Testimony of Michael Moses Ward

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Testimony of Officer James Berghanhaier in “Findings and Conclusions” and as seen in *Let The Fire Burn*

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Jim Quinn, “They Bombed In West Philly,” *Village Voice*, May 28, 1985, pg. 1.

⁵⁴⁴ Bill Peterson, “Huge Fire Destroys House Of Philadelphia Radicals,” *The Washington Post*, May 14, 1985. Pg. A-3.

The fates of the remaining MOVE members were still unknown. Conflicting reports circulated that some of the occupants of 6221 Osage Avenue had in fact, escaped and were still at large. Police officer, Michael Tursi claimed to have seen “a light-skinned man with dread locks and a rifle, ducked down behind a pile of smoldering debris.”⁵⁴⁵ Birdie Africa remained consistent with his belief that at least all of the children with the exception of the youngest boy Tomaso, fled the burning building and ran in the opposite direction of he and Ramona.⁵⁴⁶ Stake out officers positioned in the rear ally claimed that they saw no children but instead “took fire from a man holding a .22 caliber rifle and a child, who then disappeared back into the burning building.”⁵⁴⁷ However, several firefighters “with excellent vantage points overlooking the back ally,” contradicted the accounts of the police and claimed that they neither saw armed MOVE members nor heard gunfire.⁵⁴⁸

The first order of operations was to begin excavating the burned out MOVE compound and the search for human remains. The city medical examiner, Martin Aronson, who was in the opinion of Mayor Goode, highly incompetent and nothing more than an “apologist for the Rizzo administration and the police department,” refused to come to Osage Ave until a body was found.⁵⁴⁹ As a result, the procedures used to recover evidence were “unprofessional and violated generally accepted practices for

⁵⁴⁵ Testimony of Officer Tursi “Findings and Conclusions” in Boyette, *Let It Burn*, 229.

⁵⁴⁶ “Findings and Conclusions”

⁵⁴⁷ Kathy Sheehan, “F.O.P: Panel Seeking Revenge Link?” *Philadelphia Daily News*, August 2, 1985 pg. 12. Also see Special Investigation Commission Video Testimony of Lawrence D’Ulisse and Terence Mulvihill in *Let The Bunker Burn*. * Mulvihill was one of three police tried and acquitted of the beating of Delbert Orr Africa in 1978.

⁵⁴⁸ Interview with fire Lt. John Vacarelli in William Marimow “Three Firefighters Saw It Different Behind MOVE House,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 28, 1985, pg. A-1.

⁵⁴⁹ *In Goode Faith*, 248.

pathologists.”⁵⁵⁰ Additionally, “the use of a bulldozer and a crane resulted in the dismemberment and commingling of body parts as well as the destruction of important physical and medical evidence.”⁵⁵¹

In spite of the slipshod excavation methods, all of the remaining MOVE members were eventually recovered from the ash and rubble. Raymond Foster and Vincent Leaphart’s charred remains were found near the front of the residence. Their soot-free lungs indicated that they probably died early in the siege and didn’t, in fact, burn to death.⁵⁵² The other adults, and the children who were thought by Birdie to have escaped, were found in the area of the garage near the back ally. Disturbingly, the condition of the children’s remains displayed only superficial burning. Netta Dotson was clad in a “white shirt with red trim.”⁵⁵³ The oldest girl Katricia “Tree” Dotson was still wearing “Levi cut-off jeans and exhibited an abundance of pubic hair.”⁵⁵⁴ The remains of Tomaso, the youngest child were described as “having only areas of burning and long hair.”⁵⁵⁵

Two additional autopsies were conducted after the city examiner fulfilled his duty. The first was conducted in an FBI laboratory by the Special Commission appointed pathology expert who concluded “the children could have died from carbon monoxide poisoning or wounds from firearms ammunition. At least one child’s body contained metal fragments consistent with .00 Buckshot pellets or jacketed or semi-jacketed

⁵⁵⁰ “Findings and Conclusions of the MOVE Commission Hearings,” *Temple Law Quarterly*, 369.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 370.

⁵⁵² “Bodies said to include defense minister, MOVE founder’s friend,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 29, 1985. Pg. 10-A.

⁵⁵³ “Findings and Conclusions” No 29. In Charles Bowser, *Let The Bunker Burn*, 44.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

bullets.”⁵⁵⁶ The second forensic examination conducted by Pittsburgh coroner, Cecil Webb was financed by long time Philadelphia journalist and activist, Barbara Grant. Webb’s findings were similar. He concurred that the children probably died from gunfire and that their bodies could very well have been deposited back into the burned out foundation line of the house, sometime before day break on May 14.⁵⁵⁷

The radio transmission received by the Mayor’s office during the commencement of the siege which stated that “MOVE members were firing .50 caliber automatic weapons in every direction,” was also discredited. No automatic weapons were in fact found. Only one bolt action .22 caliber rifle, one shotgun and two .38 caliber revolver handguns were recovered in the smoldering embers.⁵⁵⁸

Several weeks after the conflagration, the Mayor’s office appointed an eleven-member panel of civic, legal, and religious leaders to the Philadelphia Special Investigations Commission (PSIC) with the aims of investigating the tactics of all who were involved in the siege.⁵⁵⁹ Since several of the panel appointees had been supporters of Goode’s election, the public responded to the consortium with skepticism.⁵⁶⁰ However, public opinion soon changed when the Fraternal Order of Police mounted a challenge to the inquest, instructed involved officers to plead the fifth- amendment and attempted to forestall future criminal inquiries.⁵⁶¹ After five weeks of televised hearings, the PSIC concluded, “The Mayor abdicated his responsibilities as a leader; the use of a bomb was

⁵⁵⁶ “Findings and Conclusions,” No. 30. Temple Archives.

⁵⁵⁷ Testimony of WDAS-F.M. and Fox News affiliate, Barbara Grant to author, May 13, 2017.

⁵⁵⁸ Linn Washington, “MOVE: A Double Standard of Justice,” 75. and *Let The Fire Burn*

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁶¹ Williams, *MOVE, A Case Study*, 232.

reckless and ill-conceived; the use of fire as a tactical weapon was unconscionable and that the deaths of the five children should be investigated by a grand jury.”⁵⁶²

Precisely one year later in May of 1986, a grand jury was assembled to consider a plethora of charges including reckless endangerment and murder.⁵⁶³ However, the pursuit of charges was summarily dismissed. The jury concluded that, “The confrontation was marked by epic governmental incompetence, the presence of political cowardice, inexperienced planning and inept execution. This should stand as a permanent record of these officials’ morally reprehensible behavior.”⁵⁶⁴

The only individual involved in the events of May 13, 1985, who served a prison sentence was the only surviving adult member of MOVE, Ramona Johnson Africa. Ramona served a full seven- year term for the charges of riot and conspiracy after refusing a grant of parole under the condition that she cease affiliation with MOVE⁵⁶⁵

James Berghaier, the police officer who shepherded Birdie Africa away from the flames and smoke, was routinely harassed and derided by his associates on the force. Because of his testimony in front of the Special Investigation Committee, he was dubbed “Birdie Berghaier.” “Nigger lover” was subsequently spray painted on his locker. Berghaier was later diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and left the Philadelphia Police Department in 1987.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶² “Findings and Conclusions No. 22, 24, 27, 29” in *Let It Burn* 331-336.

⁵⁶³ Report of the County Investigating Grand Jury, Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County, No. 86-007363 at 17 (May 15, 1986) “Grand Jury Report” in “MOVE: A Double Standard of Justice” 77.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁵ “Philadelphia Bombing Survivor Leaves Prison,” *The New York Times*, May 14, 1992. timemachine.nytimes.com (accessed August 12, 2017)

⁵⁶⁶ Interview with Craig Philips, “The MOVE Bombing 29 Years Later,” www.PBS.org (accessed December 18, 2017)

Conclusion

As it is important to examine MOVE within the radicalized counterculture milieu that aided and abetted its advance, it is of equal value to place the near extermination of the group within the framework of the 1980s. Certainly the Reagan years spurred America's hard turn toward the political right and ushered in an era of corporate wealth and callous disregard for people of color.⁵⁶⁷ Cedric J. Robinson asserts, "During this time, radical movements were being challenged (by the U.S. government) in El Salvador, Zaire, Nicaragua and South Africa. Simultaneously, police violence, torture and assassinations proliferated at home. Deindustrialization, unemployment and poverty became a way of life. Racism was on the rise."⁵⁶⁸ In spite of Ife- William's declaration that MOVE was ineffective as an instrument of the Black Freedom Struggle, she adds, "The MOVE experience highlights those methods typically used to suppress recalcitrance."⁵⁶⁹ In the opinion of Ramona Africa, "The extermination of MOVE was no different than an assassination of a head of state."⁵⁷⁰

Undeniably, MOVE emerged from the same ideological environs that invigorated other New Left iconoclasts and political insurgents during "the long decade of the 1960s."⁵⁷¹ But the idea of characterizing John Africa and his followers as a legitimate part of the larger Black freedom struggle is often met with debate because they alienated

⁵⁶⁷ Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Political Tradition* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983) xvi.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ Ife- Williams, 245.

⁵⁷⁰ Interview with Ramona Johnson Africa and Michael Davis Africa Jr. on Mike Reyes Show, "Impacto Cristiano Latino," WHYY Wilmington (originally aired May 18, 2015) www.youtube.com (accessed January 12, 2018)

⁵⁷¹ Van Gosse, 7.

themselves from many organizations in the movement that failed to embrace their unorthodox lifestyle. Moreover, despite some of the similarities between MOVE and the BPP's goals, John Africa's revolutionary black humanism did not resonate with black activists seeking a more coherent and concrete way to challenge inequality. In fact, about a year after the Osage Avenue fire, a symposium was held at Temple University in which former Black Panther, Bobby Seal served as keynote speaker. Seal exclaimed, "MOVE violated the cardinal rule. You don't alienate the people especially the people around you in the community. We, the Black Panthers created too many programs to serve the people. A revolutionary group must have goals and objectives. MOVE does not."⁵⁷²

At a glance, MOVE's protest methods may have appeared abnormal, but it is crucial to remember that when assessing the Black Freedom Struggle a holistic examination must be applied. As Peniel E. Joseph points out, "The Black Freedom struggle is not a one dimensional narrative. Instead it is comprised of indelible portraits of multilayered activism forged in a black organizing tradition that valued hard work, political principle and self- help in the cause of human dignity."⁵⁷³ MOVE, as radical as they were, exhibited these very traits. Accordingly, I must maintain that this gravely misunderstood organization can finally be given a degree of legitimacy often missing from other scholarly accounts.

At the time of this writing, Ramona Johnson Africa continues to function as Minister of Communication and principle representative of the MOVE organization. Immediately upon her release from prison in 1992 she began delivering lectures for a variety of grass

⁵⁷² *The Philadelphia Daily News*, March 14, 1986.

⁵⁷³ *The Black Power Movement*, 24-25.

roots social justice / human rights organizations and media outlets. Aside from her advocacy for the release of the remaining MOVE 9, she also sustains vocal support for the freeing of the political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, the eradication of the prison-industrial complex, the Standing Rock Pipeline protests and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Beginning in October 2018, one of the casualties of the black freedom struggle would finally be redressed when seven members of the MOVE 9 were freed from prison after forty years. Two of the original nine, expired while still incarcerated.

Today, the MOVE organization is experiencing a resurgence due to the energetic initiatives of the son of two of the liberated MOVE 9, Debbie Sims and Michael Davis Africa. Aside from being a MOVE member by birth, Mike Africa Jr. works consistently at the helm of his own production company which combines motivational resilience speaking, music and media in an effort to tackle many profound issues such as police brutality, climate change, and support for children of incarcerated parents.

Ramona Africa affirms, “The system has failed black people and poor people. Government is not playing games with black people and every black man and woman is involved whether they like it or not. MOVE keeps pressure on government. As true revolutionaries we never make apologies or back down. Unity is the key to revolution.”⁵⁷⁴

Revolution is Forever

⁵⁷⁴ Shoneburg Center For Research in Black Culture onamove.com

References

Primary Sources:

- Abu-Jamal, Mumia, *Live from Death Row*. New York: Perennial, 1996.
- Abu-Jamal, Mumia. *We Want Freedom*. Cambridge: South End Press, 2004.
- Africa, Ramona. "Ramona Africa Speaks about the MOVE 9, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Dr. Mutulu Shakur, Political Prisoners and More." Uploaded to youtube by esnd productions. Accessed August 8, 2016. [https://: www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com).
- Africa, Ramona. And Michael Davis Africa Jr. Interview on WHYY, Wilmington "The Mike Reyes Show: Impacto Cristiano Latino." Originally aired May 18, 2015. [https://: www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com). Accessed January 12, 2018.
- Alpern, David with Susan Agrest. "Roundhouse Punches," *Newsweek*, July 4, 1977.
- Anderson, John and Hilary Hevenor. *Burning Down The House: MOVE and the Tragedy Of Philadelphia*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1987.
- Babcock, Charles R. "Justice Accuses Philadelphia of Police Abuses." *The Washington Post*, August 14, 1979. [https:// www.washingtonpost.com/archive/ Politics/1979/08/14/justice-accuses-philadelphia-police-abuses](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/Politics/1979/08/14/justice-accuses-philadelphia-police-abuses).
- Bennets, Leslie. "She Says Natural Childbirth and Really Means It." *The Sunday Bulletin*, August 10, 1975.
- Bennett, Richard K. *Pennsylvania Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights*. March, 1971. Accessed May 1, 2016. www.law.umaryland.edu.
- Bims, Hamilton. "Deacons for Defense: Negroes are fighting back in Bogalusa and other Towns." *Ebony* (September 1965): 25-30.
- "Black Panther Party Collection, The." *The Bob Finch Photography Archive*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Libraries. Accessed June 10, 2016. <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/black-panther-party-1968-1972>.
- Blackwell, Lucien. "Bombing on Osage Avenue." Interview on PBS WHYY-TV, 1987. Accessed February 19, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com>
- Bowser, Charles. *Let The Bunker Burn: The Final Battle With MOVE*. Philadelphia: Camino Books, 1989.
- Boyette, Michael and Randi Boyette. *Let It Burn: The Philadelphia Tragedy*. 1st ed. Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1989.

- Bunch, Will. "An Inauspicious Beginning." *Philadelphia Daily News*, 1978. Accessed March 2, 2016 <https://www.inquirer.com/phill/news/special>.
- Bunch, Will. "Bunker Being Built In Preparation for Confrontation with Police." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 5, 1985.
- Caparella, Kitty. "MOVE Refuses to Go to Court." *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 2, 1978.
- Caparella, Kitty. "Bomb Plot Mushrooms into Siege." *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 7, 1978.
- Caparella, Kitty. "MOVE Has Virginia Branch." *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 8, 1978.
- Caparella, Kitty. "True Believer Can't Believe This." *Philadelphia daily News*, March 10, 1978.
- Caparella, Kitty. "OH MY GOD! THEY SHOT A COP!." *Philadelphia Daily News*, August 9, 1978.
- Caparella, Kitty. "Will MOVE Rise Again?." *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 24, 1986.
- Cipriano, Ralph and Tom Infield. "You Either Loved Him or Hated Him, Rizzo's Blunt Personality Kept Him In Controversy." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 17, 1991.
- Clarity, James F. "Judge Balks Philadelphia's Effort to Isolate Revolutionary Group." *The New York Times*, March 3, 1978. <https://www.nytimes/1978/03/03/archives>. Accessed July 10, 2016.
- Cluster, Dick. Ed. *They Should Have Served That Cup of Coffee: 7 Radicals Remember the '60s*. Boston: South End Press, 1979.
- Cooper, Dick. "MOVE Leader Cleared: U.S. Jury Acquits Leaphart, 1 other," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 23, 1981.
- Cory, Bruce. "A Close Look at the Philadelphia Story: Has Rizzo Regime Encouraged Brutality?." *Police Magazine* 4, No. 2 (July 1979): 36.
- Curry, George E. "MOVE: A Back-to-Nature Group Whose Nature Remains an Enigma." *Chicago Tribune*, May 19, 1985. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm>.
- DeWolf, Rose. "Mike's Memories." *The Philadelphia Daily News*, November 29, 1999.

- Ditko, Karen. "Citywide Coalition Organized to Settle MOVE Encounter." *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 14, 1978.
- Dubin, Murray. "Revolution Ain't Verbalized." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 9, 1975.
- Dubin, Murray. "MOVE 9 Waive Jury, Will Defend Themselves." *Philadelphia Inquirer* December 19, 1979.
- Dubin, Murray. "Nine MOVE Members Convicted, All Guilty in Killing of Officer." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 9, 1980.
- Dubin, Murray and Robert Terry. "MOVE and City Reach Pact: Group to Give Up Today." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 4, 1978.
- Dubin, Murray. "MOVE House Stirs Neighbors Outrage." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 2, 1983.
- Dubois, John L. and Thomas Gibbons Jr. "7 Policemen Injured In Clash With MOVE Commune Members." *The Evening Bulletin*, March 29, 1976.
- Eichel, Larry. "MOVE Members Speak Out- Loudly and Often." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 25, 1975.
- "France Rejects Request From Cleaver for Asylum," *The New York Times*, May 20, 1973. [https:// www.nytimes.com/1973/05/20/archives](https://www.nytimes.com/1973/05/20/archives). Accessed July 18, 2016.
- Geiselman Jr., A.W. "Bowling to Precedent, No Gags for MOVE." *Philadelphia* January 20, 1980.
- Geiselman Jr., A.W. "Stop It Enough! MOVE cultist yells," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, July 10, 1981.
- Geiselman Jr., A.W. "MOVE Founder Asks For Acquittal," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, July 17, 1981.
- Geller, Larry. "Black Panthers Unit Brands of Branch and Jerimiah X Fronts," *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 12, 1968.
- Geller, Larry. "The Public Interest Law Concern of Philadelphia Report." *The Philadelphia Tribune*, April 20, 1969.
- Gibbons Jr., Thomas J. "MOVE Group Jailed, Battle Police in Cells." *The Evening Bulletin*, April 8, 1975.
- Gillespie, John T. "MOVE Rejects Modern Lifestyle." *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, April 8, 1975.

- Gillespie, John T. "Neighbors Complain About Threats from MOVE Members." *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, April 25, 1975.
- Gillespie, John T. "MOVE Appeals to Zoning Board Over Stray Dogs." *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, April 26, 1975.
- Gillespie, John T. "MOVE Shows Dead Tot." *The Sunday Bulletin*, April 11, 1976.
- Goode, W. Wilson with Joann Stevens. *In Goode Faith: Philadelphia's First Black Mayor Tells His Story*. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press.
- G-Town Radio. "Interview of Ramona Africa and Kareem Howard." Morning Feed Webcast. Accessed May, 2017. www.mixcloud.com.
- Gunter, David. "MOVE Kills Surrender Deal." *The Evening Bulletin*, February 27, 1978.
- James, Louise Leaphart. "On the MOVE." *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 29, 1975.
- James, Louise Leaphart. *John Africa... Childhood Untold Until Today*. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2013.
- Janson, Donald. "Panthers Raided In Philadelphia." *The New York Times*, September 1, 1970. <https://www.nytime.com/1970/09/01/archives/panthers-raided-in-Philadelphia>.
- Joubert, Berte. "Philadelphia: Police Holocaust." *Workers World*, May 23, 1985.
- Karasik, Ellen. "MOVE Members Show Body of Baby at Secret Meeting." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 6, 1976.
- Knighton, Jeanette, a.k.a. Pam Africa, interview with author, Joseph Cranston, on May 6, 2017.
- Layton, Charles. "DA Refuses Action on MOVE Claim." *The Philadelphia Tribune*, April 13, 1976.
- Lee, Adrian. "Delbert Africa Beating Case." *The Evening Bulletin*, May 10, 1979.
- Lewis Raymond. "MOVE Called Misguided." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 17, 1975.
- Marimow, William. "Three Firefighters Saw It Different Behind MOVE House." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 28, 1985.
- Marimow, William. "Believed to be unspent bullet in MOVE body: City Staff failed to find it." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 8, 1985.

- Marimow, William. "Bodies said to be defense minister, MOVE founder's friend." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August, 29 1985.
- McCoy, Craig R. "Who was John Africa?." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 8, 2010.
<https://www.inquirer.com/philly/news>.
- Murray, Laura. "4 Members of MOVE Arrested in Court." *The Philadelphia Tribune*, March 28, 1975.
- Murray, Laura. "MOVE: Deputies Caused Baby Death." *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 11, 1976.
- Neumann Jonathan and William Marimow, "The Homicide Files: How Phila. Detectives Compel Murder Confessions." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 24 -27, 1977.
- New York Times, The*. "Philadelphia Bombing Survivor Leaves Prison." May 14, 1992
<https://www.nytimes.com/1992/05/14>. Accessed August 8, 2018.
- Newton, Huey P. *To Die For The People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton*. New York: Writers and readers, 1995.
- Newton, Huey P. "Objective No 7. From the Black Panther Party 10-Point Program," *The Black Panther*, July 20, 1967.
- Newton, Huey P. *War Against the Panthers: A Study of Repression in America*. New York: Harlem River Press, 1996.
- "No Welcome Wagon for MOVE in N.E. Philly." *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, February 10, 1978, Philadelphia: Temple University Special Collections Archives, Box 1297, Folder 15.
- "Nobody Leads These People." *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, Philadelphia: Temple University Special Collections Archives, Box 1297, Folder 15.
- Onamove.com. "Being a Revolutionary." About MOVE. Accessed July 12, 2020.
<http://onamove.com>
- Onamove.com "Belief and Practice." About MOVE. Accessed April 30, 2016.
<http://onamove.com>
- Onamove.com "Delbert Africa," MOVE 9. Accessed March 26, 2017.
<http://onamove.com>
- Onamove.com "Free the MOVE 9," Move 9. Accessed March 26, 2017.
<http://onamove.com>.

- Onamove.com "John Africa," Accessed March 10, 2016. <http://onamove.com>.
- Onamove.com "Phil Africa" MOVE 9. Accessed May 10, 2017. <http://onamove.com>.
- Onamove.com "Ramona Africa Interview at Schomberg Center for Research in Black Culture, December 6, 2016," Accessed May 10, 201. <http://onamove.com>.
- Orr, Delbert. "Interview in 1976 by WHYY-TV 12." In Philadelphia MOVE Bombing Documentary. <https://www.youtube.com>. Accessed December 14, 2018.
- Peterson, Bill. "Huge Fire destroys House Of Philadelphia Radicals." *The Washington Post*, May 14, 1985. <https://washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1985> Accessed December 14, 2018.
- Philadelphia Daily News, The*. "Four Officers named in MOVE Beating." February 13, 1980. Temple University Archives, Philadelphia Pa., Box 1206, Folder 3.
- Philadelphia Inquirer, The*. "The 1985 MOVE Bombing in Philadelphia- The Confrontation." Released 2010, <https://www.youtube.com> Accessed June 20, 2018.
- Philadelphia Inquirer, The*. "The MOVE Commission Hearing Transcripts." October 28, 1985. Temple University Archives, Philadelphia Pa., Box 989, Folder 1883.
- Philadelphia Inquirer, The*. "Now is the Time for MOVE to Move on." June 18, 1976. Temple University Archives, Philadelphia Pa., Box 1129, Folder 9
- Philadelphia Journal, The*. "Get Out or Die!, Says, Mayor." March 26, 1978. Temple University Archives, Philadelphia, Pa., Box 1203, Folder 10.
- Philadelphia Special Investigation Commission. *MOVE Records Series-Public Hearings* https://library.temple.edu/finding_aids/philadelphia-special-investigations-commission-move-records.
- Pilkington, Ed. "America's Deadliest Prosecutors: Five lawyers, 440 death sentences." *The Guardian*, June 30, 2016.
- Police Academy Recruiter Notebook. "Explore a career as a city of Philadelphia Police Officer." Philadelphia: City of Philadelphia Department of Records, Archives (Miscellaneous Subjects), Vol. IX
- Police Advisory Board. "Special Collections Research Center, Administrative Records." Philadelphia: Temple University Library. <http://diamond.temple.edu/records>

- Porter, Jill. "Rizzo's Aim is Equality for Whites." *The Philadelphia Daily News*, March 22, 1978.
- Porter, Jill. "Vote White," *The Philadelphia Daily News*, September 22, 1978.
- Powelton Community in support of MOVE. "An Open Letter to Mayor Rizzo, Our Philadelphia Neighbors and City Council." July 3, 1977. Temple Universities Libraries Special Collections Research Center, Philadelphia Pa., Box 993, Folder 1894.
- Price, Debbie and Joseph R. Daughen. "Explosive Discrepancy." *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 25, 1985.
- Price, Roberta, *Huerfano: A Memoir of Life in the Counterculture*. Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006.
- Quinn, Jim. "The Making of a MOVER." *The Philadelphia Daily News*, March 10, 1978.
- Quinn, Jim. "MOVE considers Donald Glassey a Judas." *The Philadelphia Daily News*, March 10, 1978.
- Quinn, Jim. "The Heart of Darkness," *Philadelphia Magazine* 69, No. 5 (May 1978): 248
- Quinn, Jim. "MOVE Sect in Philadelphia Agrees to surrender, Leaving Run Down House." *The Washington Post*, May 5, 1978.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archives/politics/1978/05/05/> Accessed December 14, 2016.
- Quinn, Jim. "They Bombed in West Philly." *The Village Voice*, May 28, 1985.
- Reid, Ken and Ashley Halsey. "Police Chant Protest." *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, August 6, 1979.
- Rich, Carol. "Foes Call School Board 'Hustlers'." *The Evening Bulletin*, April 16, 1974.
- Roberts, Gene. "Police Brutality Complaints: Prominent Cases." *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, August 19, 1974.
- Rosenburg, Tina. "The Deadliest D.A." *The New York Times*, July 16, 1995.
- Saline, Carol. "Halting the Cult: A 10 Year Battle." *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 13, 1985.
- Sama, Dominic. "MOVE Barred for Obscenities." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 22, 1974.

- Schogol, Marc and Robert Terry. "Commune Members Clash With Police." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 29, 1976.
- Shaeffer, Marilyn. "MOVE Member Guilty of Assault." *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, January 18, 1975.
- Shaffer, Jan. "Judge Acquits Policemen in Beating Before MOVE Case Finalizes." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 3, 1980.
- Sheehan, Kathy. "F.O.P. Panel Seeking Revenge Link?." *Philadelphia Daily News*, August 2, 1985.
- Shorter, Charles. "3,500 Hear Muhammad Demand Justice for Colored." *The Philadelphia Tribune*, August 6, 1960.
- Statistical Atlas. "Pennsylvania Race and Origin of Selected Large Cities and Other Places, Earliest Census to 2010." Table 39. Minneapolis, Minn., Cedar Lake Ventures. Accessed August 4, 2016. www.statisticalatlas.com.
- Stevens-Collins, E. "Who Were the MOVE 9?." Documentary. <https://www.youtube.com>. Accessed. May 26, 2016.
- Takiff, Jonathan. "Decades of Dominance, Electric Factory Reigns Supreme." *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 11, 1988.
- Terry, Robert. "West Philadelphia Commune Members Clash with Police: 6 Held." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 29, 1976.
- Turner, James. "Black Students and Their Changing Perspectives." *Ebony*, August, 1969.
- Wallace, Andrew. "A Dispute Imperils MOVE Truce." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 24, 1978.
- Washington, Linn. "Civil Rights Suit Is Filed Against MOVE." *Philadelphia Daily News*, June 2, 1977.
- Washington, Paul M. *Other Sheep I Have: The Autobiography of Father Paul M. Washington*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Weiss, Phillip. "How he Bombed in Philadelphia: Goode, Bad, and Ugly." *The New Republic*, June 10, 1985.
- Williams, Elizabeth A. "Radical Group Stops School Board Meeting." *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, March 26, 1974.

Secondary Sources:

- Altman, Robin. "Sympathy for the Devil: Charles Manson's Exploitation of California's 1960s Counter Culture." Master's Thesis, University of Colorado, 2015.
<https://scholar.colorado.edu/cgi/viewcontent>.
- Anderson, Elijah. *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Assefra, Hizkias and Paul Wahrhaftig, *The MOVE Crisis in Philadelphia: Extremist Groups and Conflict Resolution*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990.
- Austin, Joe Alan and Michael Willard, eds. *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: NYU Press, 1998.
- Bauman, John F. "W. Wilson Goode: The Black Mayor as Urban Entrepreneur." *The Journal of African-American History* 77, No. 3 (Spring 1992): 141-158.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2717558>. Accessed July 7, 2017.
- Beard, Charles A. *President Roosevelt and the Coming of War, 1941: A Study in Appearances and Realities*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948.
- Bloom, Alexander and Wini Breines, eds. *Takin' It To The Streets: A Sixties Reader*. 3rd. Ed. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Burrough, Bryan. *Days of Rage: America's Radical Underground, the FBI, and the Forgotten Age of Revolutionary Violence*. New York: Penquin Books, 2016.
- Callicott, J. Baird and Robert Frodeman, eds. *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy (2 Volume Set)* New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2008.
- Chomsky, Noam. *At War with Asia: Essays on Indochina*. Edinbugh and Oakland: AK Press, 2004.
- Coulson, Daniel and Sharon Shannon, *No Heroes: Inside the FBI's Secret Counter-Terror Force*. New York: Mass Market Paperbacks, 1999.
- Country, Matthew J. *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.
- Daughen, Joseph R. and Peter Binzen. *The Cop Who Would Be King: The Honorable Frank Rizzo*. Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1977.
- Demby, Gene. "I'm From Philly. 30 Years Later, I'm Still Trying to Make Sense Of the MOVE Bombing." *NPR Morning Edition*, May 15, 2015.
<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/05/13>.

- Donner, Frank. *Protectors of Privilege: Red Squads and Police Repression in Urban America*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Dunlap, Charles J. "The Origins of the American Military Coup." *Parameters* (Winter 1992-93): 2-20.
- Ellsworth, Scott. *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*. Baton Rouge: The University of Louisiana Press, 1982.
- Ellul, Jacques. *The Technological Society*. New York: Vintage books, 1964.
- Evans, Sara M. "Sources of the Second Wave: The Rebirth Of Feminism." In *"Long Time Gone: Sixties America Then and Now"*, ed., Alexander Bloom, 189-208 New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Floyd-Thomas, J.M. "The Burning of Rebellious Thoughts: MOVE as Revolutionary Black Humanism." *The Black Scholar* 32, No. 1 (Spring 2002): 11-21.
- Geraghty, Jim. "It's Not the 1960s: Group Violence in America is Hard to Pull Off." *National Review*, June 22, 2017. <https://www.nationalreview.com/2017/06/terrorism-political-violence-groups>. Accessed May 17, 2018.
- Gordy, John M. ed. *Limited Wants, Unlimited Means: A Reader on Hunter-Gatherer Economics and the Environments*. New York: Island Press, 1997.
- Gosse, Van. *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretive History*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Gregg, Robert S. *Sparks From the Anvil of Oppression: Philadelphia's African Methodists and Southern Migrants, 1890-1940*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.
- Hamilton, Fred. *Rizzo: From Cop to Mayor of Philadelphia*. New York: Viking Press, 1973.
- Harry, Margot. *Attention, MOVE! This is America!*. Chicago: Banner Press, 1987.
- Helium. "The Immediate Effects of King's Murder." <http://helium.com>. Accessed April 2, 2016.
- Hensley, Kelly. "Cicely Delphin Williams." In *Notable Women in the Life Sciences: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Benjamin F. Shearer and Barbara Shearer 396-400 Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996.

- Hilliard, David and Donald Weise, eds. *The Huey Newton Reader*, New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002.
- “Huey P. Newton A Story.” PBS. <https://www.youtube.com> Accessed May 10, 2016.
- Ife-Williams, Suzanne. “Police Brutality: A Case Study of Philadelphia/MOVE.” PhD. diss., Atlanta University, 1988 <https://radar.aucter.edu> Accessed May 12, 2016.
- Jezer, Marty. *Abbie Hoffman: American Rebel*. New York: Rutgers University Press, 1992.
- Joseph, Peniel E. “Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement.” In, *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* ed., Peniel E. Joseph, 251-78. New York and London: Routledge, 2006.
- Keiser, Richard A. “The Rise of a Biracial Coalition in Philadelphia.” In *Racial Politics In American Cities*, ed., Rufus P. Browning, Dale Rogers Marshall, and David H. Tabb. New York: Longman Publishing Group, 1990.
- Kohn, Richard H. “The Danger of Militarization in an Endless War on Terrorism.” *The Journal of Military History* 73, No. 1 (2008): 177-2008
<https://doi.org/10.1353/jmh.0.0216> Accessed June 18, 2018.
- Lappe, Francis. *Diet for a Small Planet*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1971.
- Laue, James H. “Third Party Roles in Community Conflict: The MOVE Experience.” *Conflict Resolution Notes* 4, No. 2 (September 1986): 13-14.
- Lee, Spike. *A Huey P. Newton Story*. 2001. New York: Forty Acres and a Mule Filmworks. <https://www.pbs.org/hueypnewton/about/html>. Accessed May 16, 2016.
- Lipsitz, George. *A Life in the Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition (Critical Perspectives on the Past)*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998
- Lyons, Paul. *The People of This Generation: The Rise and Fall of the New Left in Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003.
- MacFarlane, Scott. *The Hippie Narrative: A Literary Perspective on the Counterculture* Jefferson, NC: MacFarlane and Company Inc. Publishers, 2007.
- Machtinger, Howard. “You Say You Want Revolution.” *In These Times*, February 18, 2009. <https://inthesetimes.com/article/you-say-you-want-revolution>. Accessed June 20, 2018.

- Manning, Marable. "Black Studies and the Racial Mountain." *Souls: A Critical Journal Of Black Politics, Culture, and Society* 2, No. (Summer 2000): 17-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999940009362222>. Accessed August 14, 2017.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1972.
- Melina, Remy. "Earth Day co-founder Ira Einhorn preached against the Vietnam War and violence, but had a dark side." NBC-News, Lifeslittlemysteries.com Updated April 21, 2011. http://www.nbcnews.com/id/42711922/ns/Technology_science/earth-day-co-founder. Accessed June 20, 2017.
- Miller, Timothy S. *The Hippies and American Values*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2011.
- Murrell, Nathaniel Samuel, William David Spencer, and Adrian Anthony McFarlane eds., *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.
- Naess, Arne. "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary." *Journal of Philosophy and Social Science* 16, 1973: 95.
- Neal-Cleaver, Kathleen. "Philadelphia Fire." *Transition*, No. 51 (May,1991):150-57 <https://Anti-AbiestCompositionCollective.wordpress.com>. Accessed August 8, 2018.
- Nettleford, Rex. "Discourse on Rastafarian Reality." In *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*, eds., Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, William David Spencer, and Adrian Anthony McFarlane, 311-25. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.
- Niederhoffer, Arthur. *Behind the Shield: The Police in Urban Society*. New York: Anchor Books, 1969.
- Nunnelley, William A. *Bull Connor*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1991.
- O'Conner, J. Patrick. *The Framing of Mumia Abu-Jamal*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2008.
- Onykada, Ekeogu Joi. "MOVE People are Used to This: The MOVE Organization, Media Representation and Resistance During Pre-MOVE Conflict Years." PhD. diss., Arizona State University, 2014. <https://graduation.asu.edu.com> Accessed May 18, 2016.
- Osder, Jason and Andrew Herwitz, Producers. *Let The Fire Burn*, Zeitgeist Films, Washington, D.C.: George Washington University, 2013.

- Paolantonio, S.A. *Frank Rizzo: The Last Big Man in Big City America*. Philadelphia: Camino Books, 1993.
- Paris, Peter J. *The Spirituality of African Peoples: The Search for a Common Moral Discourse*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.
- Robinson, Cedric J. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983.
- Sanders, Kimberly and Judson L. Jeffries. "Framing Move: A Press Complicity in the Murder of Women and Children in the City of (Un) Brotherly Love." *Journal of African American Studies* 17, (March 2013): 566-86. <https://www.jstor.org> Accessed October 15, 2015.
- Springer, Kimberly. "Black Feminists Respond To Black Power Masculinism." In *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed., Peniel E. Joseph, 105-18. New York and London: Routledge, 2006.
- Stein, Marc. *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945-1972*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007.
- Stern, Susan. *With the Weathermen: The Personal Journal of Revolutionary Women*, ed., by Laura Browder. New Brunswick, N.J. and London, U.K.: Rutgers University Press, 2007.
- Stevens Catez. "Post-Modernism and the Jim Jones Potential," In Scott MacFarlane, *The Hippie Narrative: A Literary Perspective on the Counterculture*. Jefferson, N.C.: MacFarlane and Company Inc. Publishers, 2007.
- Suri, Jeremi. "The Rise and Fall of an International Counterculture, 1960-1975." *The American History Review* 114, No. 1 (February, 2009): 45-68. <https://www.jstor.org> Accessed June 16, 2017.
- Washington, Linn. "A Double Standard of Justice?." *Yale Journal of Law and Liberation* 1, No. 7 (1989): 67-82. <https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu>. Accessed July 7, 2017.
- Wendt, Simon. "The Roots of Black Power?: Armed Resistance and the Radicalization of the Civil Rights Movement," in *The Black Power Movement*, ed. Peniel E. Joseph, 145-66. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
- West, Cornel. "Remembering MOVE." <https://www.youtube.com> produced by hate5six.com. Accessed May 24, 2016.
- "What is Earth Week?." <http://earthweek1970.com> Accessed December 16, 2016.

Williams, Cicely. "A Nutritional Disease of Childhood, Associated with a Maize Diet." *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 58 (1933, 1983): 550-560.
<https://adc.bmj.com/archives> Accessed May 30, 2018.

Williams, Yohuru. "A Red, Black, and Green Liberation Jumpsuit." In *The Black Power Movement: Re-Thinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed., Peniel E. Joseph, 167-91. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

"Youth: The Hippies." *TIME* 90, No. 1 (July 7, 1967). www.comtent.time.com. Accessed May 14, 2016.

Ytreberg, Dag E. "Arrest-Right to Resist Excessive Force." *American Law Reports* 77 (San Francisco: Bancroft-Whitney, 1977): 290-91. In Ife-Williams, Suzanne. "Police Brutality: A Case Study of Philadelphia/MOVE." PhD diss. Atlanta University, 1988.